



The Community House, in 2021, was 100 years old. On the out-side, it looked much the same as original facility, then called the Hamilton House. Photo, TCH

History of

The Community House

The Community House, at 284 Bay Rd., in 2021, was 100 years old. It is an excellent example of adaptive reuse, i.e., the preservation of a structure's exterior and repurposing of the inside for changing needs.

On the outside, the building looked very much the same as the original facility, then called the Hamilton House. Its purpose also had changed little, i.e., providing the communities of Hamilton and Wenham with a place to bring people together for services that improve the quality of the life.

Hamilton House, in the beginning, mainly provided movies and bowling for Hamilton and Wenham residents. Now, the building hosts a range of programs, including child care, arts programs and recreation.

What began as basically many non-paid volunteers working together to provide services for just under 3,000 residents, is now a staff of about thirty and many volunteers that serve the regional needs of twenty times more people.

1920s, How CSHW Began

Following the end of WWI, Nov. 11, 1918, many Americans were discouraged by the large loss of lives and the very high number of wounded. In 1920, when Warren Harding became the President, he promised the United States would pursue a return to normalcy and resolve problems resulting from the war. What followed was the country enacting social welfare programs.

Community service groups, run by volunteers, became very popular, following the Great War. Their aim was “to generate a sense of equilibrium, a new stability, a renewal of camaraderie among neighbors, places to go for diversion, companionship and recreation, a sense of community.”⁶

By 1922, volunteers, in more than 800 communities, across the country, had formed non-profit, self-funded service organizations that, offered program assistance not available from the town government. Among them were Hamilton and Wenham.^{1, 10}

A small group of Hamilton and Wenham residents sought to renew and strengthen local camaraderie. They established a community services program. Members of the group included Emily P. and George S. Mandell, whose son, Lt. Samuel Mandell, an army pilot, gave the ultimate service to his country, his life, in the Great War.^{1, 10}

After the group's initial meetings to define their vision for community service programs and the people served, the founders surveyed residents of the two towns about their interest in having social, education and health services programs. Encouraged by the replies, the group, seeking guidance, contacted Community Services, Inc., in New York City, well known for its community services programs. It sent a representative, F. S. Mathewson, to guide them.^{1, 10}

No minutes of the group's first meetings remain that might describe its efforts to provide community services.¹ However, other documents of the time

indicate that World War I brought a new and broader meaning to the word “volunteering.” It not only meant volunteering for military service, but also everyday public-community service. Many came forward, offering to help.

The public, following WWI, in both Hamilton and Wenham no longer were predominantly farmers. Wealthy people from Boston and other urban areas bought the former farms and built mansions, where they employed servants, cooks, handymen and gardeners. People, not employed by the large estates, worked, at low wages for long hours, in factories in surrounding towns.



Photo, Hamilton Historical Society

How Hamilton House Began

The Mandells realized that there was not a building, in either Wenham or Hamilton, capable of hosting the programs envisioned by the community services group. Therefore, they decided to buy land and build one, at their expense.

In 1920, the Mandells created a non-profit holding company, Hamilton House, and incorporated it. ^{1, 3, 10} The name Hamilton House may have come from the name Hull House, which was in Chicago. It provided working-class people with free social and educational programs. It inspired hundreds of other similar houses around the country. ⁹⁷

Some people in Wenham wanted the building to be in Wenham. However, the Mandells insisted that it be in their hometown. ^{1, 10}

On Sep. 28, 1920, the Mandells purchased two properties (*about an acre*), from Mary Thayer. ⁶⁷ Her husband, Dr. Samuel Thayer, Hamilton’s doctor for many years, died in 1905.

The properties, on the corner of Topsfield Road (*now Asbury Street*) and Main Street (*now Bay Road*), are at the intersection of two main roads in Hamilton. Lot 1, at the back of the property abutting the Eastern Railroad track, was 16,359 sq. ft.; lot 2, at the front of the property facing Main Street (157 ft. frontage), was 27,685 sq. ft.

The two lots, part of a larger Thayer property, had been vacant since 1910, when a large fire overran it and many nearby properties. ³

Emily P. Mandell, on Dec. 23, 1920, gave the property to Hamilton House, Inc., whose officers were the Mandells. The deed stipulated that the property, then vacant, was “for the use of the inhabitants of said towns for such educational, artistic, literary, civic and social purposes, as the Board of Directors of said Grantee may, from time to time, approve and permit.” ⁶⁸

The original Samuel Thayer lots sloped down from the railroad track, at the back, to Main Street. The Mandells had the slope altered by creating, in the middle of the lots, a level terrace, 120 by 70 ft., and 3-ft. high. The front and sides of the terrace were enclosed with a fieldstone wall, with stone steps, 60 ft. wide, in the center front. The area in front of the terrace was leveled out to Main Street.

In 1921, Hamilton House, Inc. (*the Mandells*) erected a large building, in memory of their son, Samuel Mandell, and eight other men from the Hamilton-Wenham area, who died during WWI. ¹ Architectural drawings have the name, “Memorial Building.” It was to be a social center for residents; a “house of dreams,” where people could come to get away from the sorrows lingering from the brutal war and epidemic.

Guy Lowell, a prominent Boston architect, who lived in Hamilton, designed the building and the property layout. He previously designed the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. Frank R. Trussell, also a resident of Hamilton, was the contractor. ^{1, 10} Lowell chose colonial revival architecture for the 1-½ story building. He placed it behind the terrace, with its basement below the terrace surface.

The building, about 12,000 sq. ft. in total area, has a large, single-story center section (*ground floor and basement about 2,400 sq. ft.*). A 7-ft. deep portico is in front of the center section

On both sides of the center section are 1½-story gabled wings. The north wing is about 3,200 sq. ft. (*ground floor and basement*) and the south wing is about 4,000 sq. ft. (*ground floor and basement*). ¹¹

Of special note are:

- Triple tier, 18-ft. high, triple-tier, hexangular cupola, with a railing on the deck, a copper roof and a banner weathervane. The cupola originally vented air into the building.
- Redbrick exterior.
- Original name on the frieze above the portico was “Hamilton-Wenham Community House.”
- Four fluted Roman pillars, in the portico.



Wood railing on cupola deck was removed in 1993.

Photo, Hamilton Historical Society

(Similar to First Congregational Church that is north on Main Street.)

- Double-doors, with arched transom windows, in portico and ells.
- Slate roofs, with three elliptical dormers (called eyelid dormers), on the front and back of the center building.
- Ells on the front and back of both wings.
- Palladian windows on the south and north wings, with a circular window, on the north side.
- Statue in front of a large plaque, in the center of the portico.

The bronze statue is a tribute to the Mandell's son, Samuel. Friends in Hamilton and Wenham had it created by Anna Coleman Watts Ladd of Beverly. A large plaque behind the Mandell statue has the names of eight Hamilton and Wenham men, who lost their lives in WWI.⁷

Near the Main and Topsfield corner, Hamilton House erected a 48-ft. flag pole, with a circular, steel, shoe-base, on a multi-tiered, 8-ft. wide hexagonal rock base. The flag, with 48 stars, was raised at the dedication ceremony.

Viewed from the street, the clearly visible, terraced building was very impressive and the wide steps indicative of its being open to many people. In front of the building, there were five Japanese crabapple trees, which bloomed in the spring, with profuse, fragrant, pale, pink flowers.⁸⁴

The north side of the building, where there is a parking area and no lawn or shrubs, might have been quite bland had not Lowell added a large Palladian window. Now, it is solely aesthetic: a screen behind it prevents light from entering the building's stage. A small, circular attic window is above the Palladian window.

To allow sunlight into the basement, windows, partially below ground level, are in narrow wells.

There are two ells at the back of the building. The south ell has a basement entrance shed (5 ft. sq.) for access to a basement boiler room. The north ell has a porch.

At the back of the center section (west side), there is a narrow area (about 3 ft. wide) that is level with the basement floor. Within a short incline, the ground increases about 4 ft. The recessed area, like the window wells on the north side, allows sunlight to enter the basement.

The interior of the building was equally impressive, as the exterior. The Community House, in 1922, had many state-of-the-art amenities: electricity, wall sconces, flush toilets, central heat, water and a telephone. Wainscots were on all the walls, many of which were wood-paneled. The building had gas lights, as emergency backups to electrical power.¹¹⁷



Statue of Samuel Mandell, son of George and Emily Mandell, who built The Community House. Photo, TCH, 2021



Plaque behind statue has names of 8 Hamilton and Wenham men, who lost their lives during WWI. Photo, TCH, 2021



Flagpole and fieldstone base were refurbished, in 1956.

Photo, TCH, 2020



North side of building, has large Palladian window.

Photo, JHauck 2022



Ells at the back of building. South ell has a basement entrance shed. North ell has a kitchen with a porch..

Photo, Google, 2021



Palladian window, on south side.

Photo, JHauck, 2022



Recessed area allows sunlight into basement.

Photo, JHauck 2022



Porch next to kitchen.

Photo, JHauck, 2022

The first floor of the center building has a 1,440 sq. ft., hall, originally called Smith Hall. (*No information remains on who Smith was.*)⁷⁰ On the east side, two double doors open directly to the portico.

On the hall's north end, Hamilton House has an 18-ft. wide proscenium stage. It is 19 ft. deep, 15 ft.. high, and with a 4-ft. wide apron and ceiling to stage-floor velvet curtains. Stairs to the stage are on both ends of the apron.

The large main hall and theater stage were the focal point of the new building. Lowell designed the hall to seat about 200, but did not include fixed seating. The ceiling is curved to reflect sound to all parts of the hall.

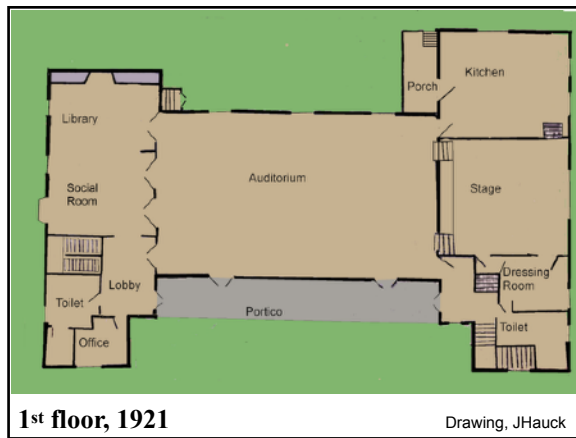
On both sides of the stage, there are doors to the north wing's gabled ell.

The door, on the west side of the stage, opens to a kitchen, which has a door to an open porch with stairs to a walkway, at the back of the building.

The door, on the east side of the stage, originally opened to a dressing room and a toilet on the same level as the stage and stairs to a small office, on the same level as the hall.

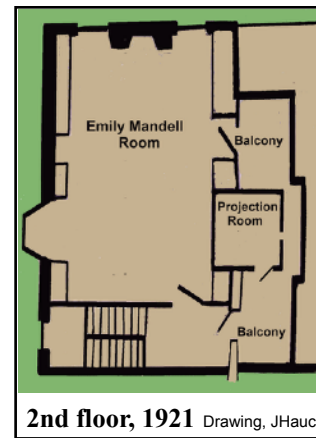
The north wing had a double-door entrance from the portico, as did the south wing..

The south wing, on the 1st floor, had a lobby, office and toilet, in the front, and an elegant library, in the back.



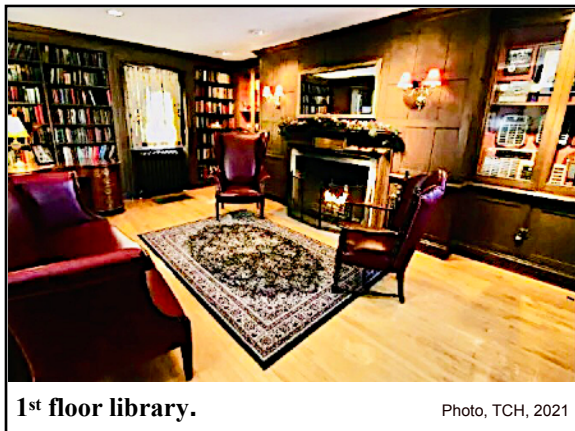
1st floor, 1921

Drawing, JHauck



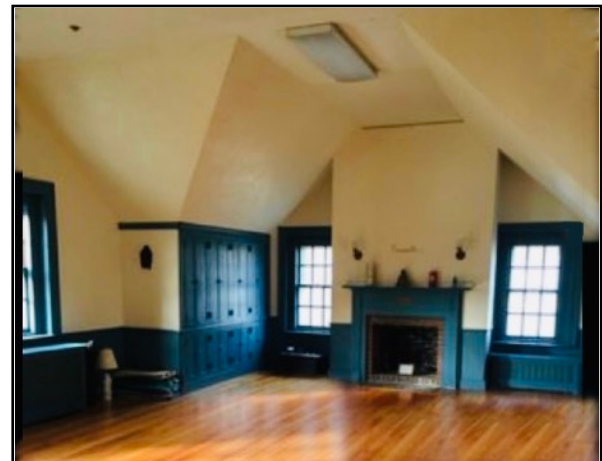
2nd floor, 1921

Drawing, JHauck



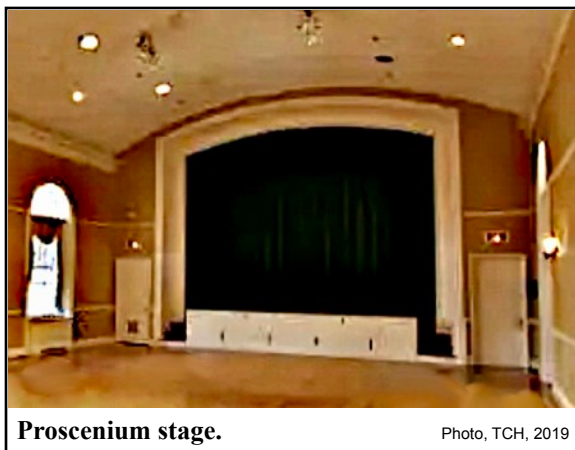
1st floor library.

Photo, TCH, 2021



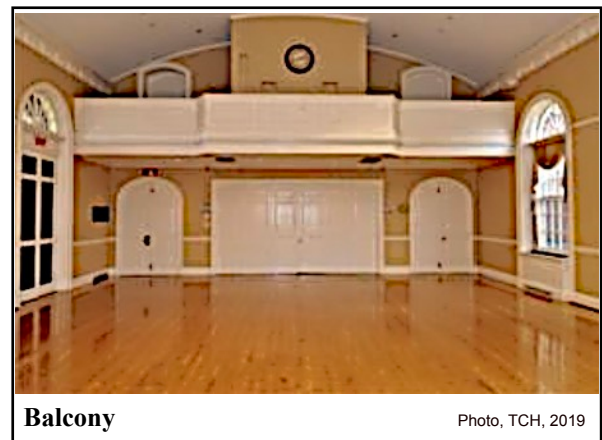
2nd floor meeting room.

Photo, TCH 2019



Proscenium stage.

Photo, TCH, 2019



Balcony

Photo, TCH, 2019

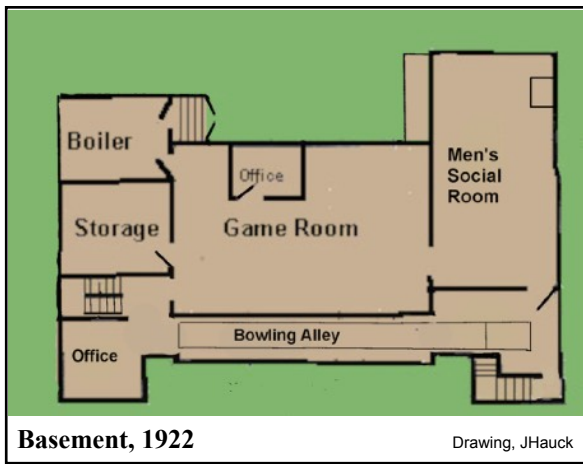
Above the south wing, a second floor, the only one in The Community House, has a large room with a bay window. Originally, various committees used the room.

Also on the second floor is the narrow balcony that is on the hall's south end. It has two doors at the back, and below there are two doors and a wide entry door to the library.

A small room with an opening at the front, in the center of the balcony, was a motion picture projection booth. There is no record of there ever being chairs on the balcony.

The basement below the portico had a single candlepin bowling lane that stretched from the south wing to the north wing. Bowlers entered the basement via stairs in the north wing ell, crossed the basement and registered at an office, in the south wing ell. ^{1, 10}

An indication that bowling was not originally planned in the meeting house is that a 1921 basement floor plan does not show a bowling alley below the portico. However, a single-lane bowling alley is shown in a 1922 plan. ¹⁴⁹



A large game room and lounge, next to the bowling alley, had a polished wood floors and a pool table. A small office was at the back of the room. A thick wall separated it from the bowling alley.⁸⁴ A coal-fired burner heated water pumped to radiators, in all the rooms. The boiler room had a large coal bin, accessible from the outside.

Next to the boiler room, was a room used for storing the many chairs used at events held in the basement meeting room.

The north wing basement had a large men's meeting room, with a fireplace. In the east ell, there were stairs to the portico.

Hamilton's assessors, in 1923, established the value of the building and land at \$57,500.³⁰ (*In 2022, the cost to reproduce the structure, might be as much as \$1.25 million.*)¹⁴⁰

The Mandells, who moved from Boston to Hamilton in 1912, lived on a 121-ac. estate, then known as Brown's Hill, that was between Miles River Road and Bridge and Essex streets.

Some of the exterior features of The Community House are similar to the house the Mandells built in Hamilton and designed by Guy Lowell. Both have a center building with wings and ells, red brick construction, and a stone-wall enclosed terrace.

George S. Mandell's family owned the Boston Evening Transcript newspaper. The Boston Transcript, like the New York Times, was a recognized newspaper of record. Mandell began as the editor (1856), next became the president (1920) and later the chairman.^{1, 10}

In 1946, the Catholic Church bought the Mandell property. It became a Carmelite seminary. In 1970, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary bought the property.⁵⁷

CSHW Leased Community House

In December 1921, a group Hamilton and Wenham residents formed the Community Service of Hamilton-Wenham (CSHW) association. Members were: Elbridge R. Anderson (*Wenham*), Frederick Ashworth (*Wenham*), Avon D. Bradeen (*H*), H. Gardner Blount (*H*), Helen C. Burnham (*W*), Robert H.

Chittick (*H*), Adeline P. Cole (*W*), Mary Curtis (*W*), George S. and Emily P. Mandell (*H*), Dorothy D. and Lester E. Libby (*H*), Arthur B. Lord (*W*), Edward J. Ready (*H*), Frank R. and Fannie B. Trussell (*H*) and Percival D. Whipple (*H*).^{1, 10}

Anderson was CSHW's first president. He served until 1924. The F. S. Mathewson, was brought in as a consultant. He formerly was with National Community Services, in New York City.¹⁰

CSHW was incorporated, as a non-profit organization. The first board of directors were: Elbridge R. Anderson, (*W*) President; Anna Agassiz (*H*), Neil W. Rice (*H*), Frederick H. Ayer (*H*), and Houston A. Thomas (*H*).^{1, 10, 139}

Hamilton House, Inc. gave CSHW, Inc. a rent-free lease to the new building.^{1, 10}

CSHW by-laws stated it was to provide, "A well rounded continuous program of leisure time activities, charities, educational classes, free lectures and other educational and health producing activities and maintain a library, for the free use of the citizens of the towns of Hamilton and Wenham."¹³⁸

CSHW board's first order of business was establishing standing committees. On Dec. 19, 1921, the board formed ten community service committees: Athletics (*biggest with 19 members*¹), Children's Activities, Educational Lectures, Girl's Activities, Health Clinics, Library, Moving Pictures, Music/Dramatic, Social Activities and University Extension Course.

CSHW also established operations committees, including: House Maintenance, Hostesses, Publicity and Finances.^{1, 70}

A large response to CSHW's call for volunteers showed that the people of the two towns wanted to work together on community service programs focused on entertainment, health and education.¹ Many residents in both towns belonged to at least one committee.^{1, 10} Strong interest in helping was the only requirement, for being on most committees. The Finance Committee appointed Emily Mandell to oversee and schedule daily programs.⁷⁰

The CSHW committees proposed many attractive activities to offer at the center. Essential to their continued availability were volunteers to manage the programs and contributions from wealthy families. The programs were offered at low fees, to attract many participants.

Many wealthy families, in the two towns, donated funds to the CSHW startup and its programs. The Mandells, Emily in particular, financially supported Hamilton House from its construction through her death, in 1943.^{1, 10}

She hired, in 1923, Lawrence R. Stone (*b. 1897, d. 1979*) to be a custodian. He worked, at the Hamilton House, until 1972 (*48 years*),¹⁶³ as he said, "Keeping it clean, turning on the lights, and overseeing the building."⁸⁴ There also was a grounds manager.¹²²

Early Service Programs

In the early years, there were service programs for most age groups, most were free. However, to cover utility and maintenance costs, a few charged a fee. In 1922, the Corporation's treasury had \$1,030.¹

CSHW's first income-producing program was candlepin bowling.¹ The single alley, in the basement, was available Monday to Saturday, until 9 p.m., at 50¢/hr.⁷⁰ Pinsetters were paid a nickel, for half a day's work and the alley manager was given \$15/mon.^{1, 35, 113} Candy and tobacco were sold to the bowlers, by the manager.

This was not the first bowling alley in Hamilton. The Chebacco House hotel, built before 1900 beside the lake, had a barn, with a single alley.¹¹⁰

A second income-producing program began, in 1923, The CSHW Moving Pictures Committee started showing films, in Smith Hall, on Friday and Saturday evenings, and Saturday afternoons. Initially, tickets likely cost less than the 25¢ charged by movie palaces, in other towns and Boston.

The films were black and white two-reelers and there was no sound. A grand piano played, while the movies were shown, as was done then at most motion picture theaters. A projection booth was on the balcony.

A large screen was at the back of the stage, behind a curtain. It was the practice of moving picture houses, at the time, to draw back the curtain when a film was to start. The lush velvet curtain gave the auditorium a special aura.

Hamilton House was not the only local movie theater. Movies also were available on the second floor of the Hamilton and Wenham Grange #297, on Railroad Avenue. The Grange showed films, every Thursday evening. This ended, in 1924, when a fire destroyed the building.⁴⁶

At Smith Hall, Bessie P. Cutler, of Wenham, supervised seating and sold tickets. Scott Libby of Hamilton was the projectionist.¹ The audience viewed films was from bleachers, capable of seating a hundred.^{70,112}

Elsewhere in the Hamilton House, women took caning lessons, in the kitchen; men smoked cigars and talked politics, in the library; and children met with scout leaders, in the basement.^{1, 10}

In the 1920s and 1930s, Smith Hall hosted various shows, dances, teas, potluck suppers and lunches. However, no record remains about any plays performed. The main aim was to bring a broad range of people together. A broad range of programs typifies CSHW's offerings throughout its existence.

Hamilton and Wenham, at the time, while still being mainly farming communities, had a growing number of people that wanted to increase their education, but had employment obligations and limited finances that kept them from traveling to colleges and paying tuition. CSHW met this education need by offering university extension courses that were

taught by university professors, who weekly went to towns.

CSHW expanded its initial children's services, in 1925, when it came to the aid of Hamilton's schools. Because there was no large room for assembly exercises, at the South School on Railroad Ave., they were held at Smith Hall. The Hamilton School Committee reported, "The exercises held there have been extremely enjoyable, and have been an influence in molding our student body, into a unit."¹¹

This was the first mention of the "Community House," in town records. In 1923, it was called Hamilton House, when the assessor valued the building at \$57,500.³⁰ (*As a non-profit organization, the town taxed neither the property nor the building.*) Many local groups were using the community house, for their meetings and special events. Other than the town halls, there were no auditoriums, in either of the two towns.

In the late 1920s, Hamilton House switched from coal to oil to heat the boiler. Fees from bowling and movies paid for the building's heat and electricity as well as for expenses of CSHW's programs. Emily Mandell paid for janitor's salary and supplies.

CSHW's first financial quandary began in October 1929 - the start of the Great Depression.

1930s, First Building Changes

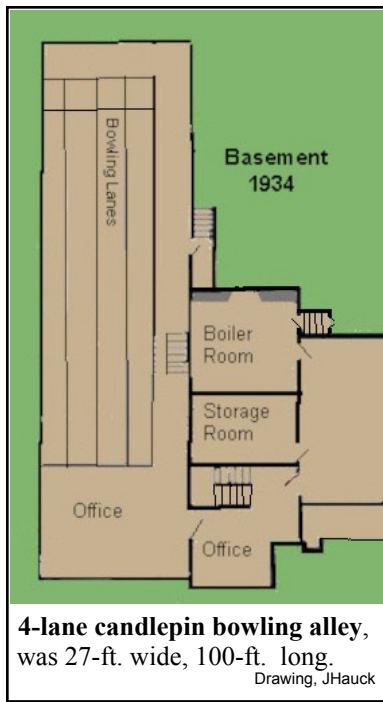
By 1933, the money problem was extreme. At the 1933 Hamilton Annual Town Meeting, the selectmen said, "Expenditures for public welfare and unemployment relief have been very heavy. Federal relief assisted us to a great extent, in carrying this burden. Present indications are against the promise of any material reduction in these departments. The uncertainty of continued Federal assistance should suggest to voters the wisdom of scrutinizing unnecessary expenditures."¹²

The House Committee, in September 1934, did not consider expanding the bowling alley to be an unnecessary expenditure, but rather a must to protect one of its major ways of bringing people together. The single-lane needed considerable repair.

With financial support from the Mandells and the sale of Hamilton House bonds, in the two towns, Hamilton House built a 4-lane candlepin bowling alley, by the south wing. The addition was 27-ft. wide and 100-ft. long and had front and back sections.

The front section, in congruence with other sections of the community house, had brick walls and windows, but a flat roof, with a 3-ft. high facade, level with the height of the south wing.

The bowling alley, in the back section, also had a flat roof. The alley, at the basement level of the community house, was entered from a door on the north side, facing the backyard. The new lanes, dedicated to George S. Mandell, were not automated, because the expense was too high.^{1, 10}



The former bowling area, below the portico, in 1935, became a pistol range.¹²¹ CSHW began a firearm instruction program, for high school boys. There also were rifle and pistol marksmanship and competitive target shooting. Instructors included police officers.³²

Also in 1934, the CSHW, as part of a Federal Emergency Relief Act, began a women's sewing project. The program, in the main hall, provided paid work for women. Using

loaned sewing machines and donated fabrics, they worked together to make more than 2,000 articles of clothing.²⁴

Women of the Hamilton Wenham Flower Club, from its beginning in 1934, held an annual flower show, often at the community house.⁵ While not an income source, the flower show provided brightness to visitors.

All was not bright in 1937. Two tragedies came. Hamilton House President George S. Mandell died on Aug. 11.¹³ On Nov. 11, CSHW Treasurer Chester H. Knowles died.¹⁴ Emily Mandell, who became the Honorary Hamilton House Board President, continued to provide much-needed money for maintenance and operating expenses.¹

In 1938, CSHW named Lawrence Stone the Executive Director.¹⁶² Also that year, he became a selectman. When asked by Emily Mandell how he could hold both jobs, he replied that he was entitled to an evening off from his janitorial service and the selectmen only met one night a week.⁸⁴ He worked at the community house until 1972, as a selectman for 32 years, and as the chair, from 1965 to 1969.⁸⁴

Even with the new 4-lane alley, bowling declined through the 1930s. Private contributions were CSHW's main source of income. Little of this money went into the building's maintenance.^{1, 10}

Like bowling, movie attendance declined. It was not because of poor films. Movie Nights, during the 1930s, often showed some of the latest films, even some of the Academy Award winners, such as the first winner, "All Quiet on the Western Front."

Also, the Hamilton school department showed, bi-monthly, films about American history. The films depicted events from the voyage of Columbus to the end of the Civil War.¹⁵

Despite difficult financial times, CSHW continued sponsoring many programs that brought people together, including: children's activities, educational lectures, health clinics, music/dramatic performances, a university extension course, a "big to-do" 4th of July, equestrian events, ham dinners, hurdy-gurdy music and raffles. Volunteers, from the two towns, acted as hostesses, instructors, nurses, performers, and lecturers and distributed promotional materials.³

Both as a way to acknowledge the ongoing need for volunteers and a means for gaining funds, CSHW began, after WWII, an annual volunteer awards tea, which later changed to an annual dinner that had various names. In 2021, it was the Home Town Heroes dinner, honoring volunteers during the Covid 19 epidemic.

Changes outside of the building, during the 1930s, were few.

An unseen, but important change to the community house, in 1939, was its connection to the town's new water supply system.⁷¹ Workers, paid by the Federal Emergency Relief Association Act, built the system. During this period of high unemployment, about 175 men worked on various town and state WPA projects. er a great many people

Unfortunately, few funds were available for installing all the needed faucets and pipes the water system needed. CSHW's initial custom of keeping a reserve fund of \$1,500, to accrue interest for maintenance, "had been dropped for some time."⁷¹

The Community House also installed, in 1939, a gas line off of Main Street to heat the basement boiler, replacing oil.⁷¹

1940s, WWII

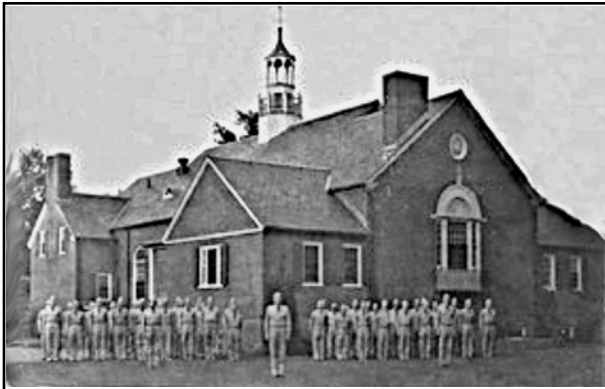
At the start of the 1940s, the community house was very active. More than 23,000 people used it, from July 1939 to May 1940.⁷²

Yet, CSHW's annual income was low, at the time. The main sources were bowling, cooking classes, a garden club and softball. There was a summer fair, but it was not as successful, as in the past.⁷²

The sounds of war marked the beginning of the 1940s. Once again, there were calls for people to volunteer to serve, both in the military and in the community.

On Feb. 1, 1941, Hamilton and Wenham men met together, at the community house, to learn about the duties and requirements of the State Guard. In March, they formed a guard company. The unit (*59 members*), the 15th Company, met Tuesday evenings, in the community house basement.⁴

With young men leaving for military service, there were many weddings at the community house. In a talk on the history of the community house, by Charles G. Rice (*known as just "CG"*), he said, "It seems, in the 30s, 40s and 50s, most local couples were married, in the community house."^{1, 10}



Massachusetts State Guard, in March 1941, formed the 15th Company. It met in the community house.

Photo, Hamilton Historical Society



Local Red Cross, in 1942, began using the community house to make bandage rolls.

Photo, Hamilton Historical Society



CSHW's funded, in 1943, building a hockey rink, on the Main Street park pond.

Photo, Hamilton Historical Society



American Legion A. P. Gardner Post 194 began holding meetings, in the basement.

Photo, Hamilton Historical Society

WWII had a major effect on CSHW's finances, apparently even more than the Great Depression. In his 1985 speech, CG said, "Finances posed no great problem until WWII," but then they began. Coming to CSHW's aid was money from the United Fund.¹

With heating oil a rationed product, during the war, CSHW decided to reduce its consumption in heating the building.¹⁶⁵ CSHW halted the movie nights and closed the bowling alley.¹

Some new health-related programs began.

A significant new program, in 1942, was the Heath Service Committee's diphtheria immunization clinic for preschool children.¹⁶ By the mid-1940s, the whooping cough (*pertussis*) vaccine, developed in the 1930s, was in widespread use. Health programs were a major focus of Emily P. Mandell.

Another new program was the local Red Cross moving, in 1942, its surgical dressings room from the Hamilton High School to the former Smith Hall, then called simply the main hall.

On Tuesdays and Thursdays, on average, 28 volunteers made rolls of bandages and other nursing supplies, to be sent to the European nations fighting the axis.^{5, 72}

During WWII and a few years following, the Hamilton-Wenham Garden Club helped people create "Victory Gardens." Classes were held at the community house.

Briefly delaying the new CSHW programs was a boiler room fire, in 1942. The gas heater exploded. The burner was quickly replaced and the boiler repaired.¹

In 1943, Emily P. Mandell died.^{1, 42} Her loss stunned CSHW. She was very involved with the community service programs. For years, "carried on major items of repair and upkeep."⁵² In 1952, the CSHW named the second-floor committee meeting room the "Emily P. Mandell Room."^{12, 6}

Unfortunately, there was no endowment for the building's maintenance, when Hamilton House transferred it to CSHW. Therefore, Bessie P. Cutler encouraged the CSHW Board to establish a maintenance fund, in memory of Emily Mandell, but it did not.^{1, 10}

A Mandell grandson, Charles Goodenough Rice ("CG"), became President of the CSHW Board. Born in Hamilton, he was president of Boston-based United States Smelting, Refining and Mining Co.

An early project led by CG was CSHW's funding, in 1943, the building of a regulation hockey rink, on the Main Street park pond. The rink had pipe-frame hockey goal cages, as well as benches. Light poles allowed skating after dark.¹⁷

More good news in 1943 was the return, during the summer, of the weekly movies.⁶⁵ Seating was on foldable, metal chairs. (*Unknown when the bleachers were removed.*)

The House Committee, in 1944, began a program for regular maintenance of the building. The Committee prepared a detailed budget to cover anticipated expenses.¹

At that time, CG said the building was "in quite good shape with projects over the past few years, which included maintenance of pumps and air systems."^{1, 10}

That the building "was in quite good shape," in large part, was due to the leadership of Oliver J. Wolcott, Jr. He was the HWCH president from 1933 to 1945, which was a difficult financial time that saw a great recession and a second world war. Wolcott was also the Hamilton moderator from 1925 to 1955 and a member of the town's Finance and Advisory Committee.²⁴

The opening of a town park, in 1945, at the corner of Asbury and Main streets, led to many more Community House visitors. Since the park did not have toilets, people used, with the CSHW's approval, the toilets in the community house. (*Toilets were built at the park, in 1955.*)

Increased traffic also came when fuel restrictions were lifted, following the end of WWII. In the summer of 1946, the Hamilton Park Conservation Commission began busing children from the community house, once a week, to the Robert B. Walsh Park at Chebacco Lake. The Moving Picture Committee funded the program.²⁰

Following the war, the CSHW Board said it was "pleased with the fine financial condition of Community Service."¹¹⁶ This, in large part, was due to the success of the movies program. Committee reported, in 1946, that from the start of movies until then, 16,561 people saw 114 shows.¹¹⁵

Despite the "fine financial condition," Hamilton House, in 1947, insured the community house, for \$30,000, far less its estimated value. Long-time board member Bessie P. Cutler insisted the amount was inadequate. She wrote to the HH board:

"I feel there is a great responsibility toward the work of community service and our members, whose money makes the work possible and our Hamilton House available to all. Therefore, I wish to go on record as not being in accord with the vote passed on the 11th of Feb. to insure the community house for \$30,000, which is less than one-half of its value, and which would not be enough to permit us to rebuild in case of destruction, by fires or any other cause. I feel strongly we have fallen down on the faith entrusted to us."³

Hamilton House did not increase the insurance amount, It added more fire extinguishers.⁷⁶

A positive development in 1947 was the dedication of the nearby town recreation area as Patton Park, in memory of former town resident Gen. George S. Patton, Jr. In subsequent years, Patton Park provided a venue for many CSHW programs, most notably an annual July 4th celebration. "One

year alone, it attracted over 20,000 people, which was more than three times the local population."¹

A major new program began in 1946. American Legion A. P. Gardner Post 194 began holding meetings, in the basement's game room.¹¹⁶ It was, however, a short stay. The veterans experienced the basement's water problems.⁷⁶ In 1947, Post 194, moved⁵¹, to the former Adelaide Dodge Walsh school building, on School Street.²⁰

The Hamilton-Wenham Visiting Nurse Association was another new organization moving into the community house. CSHW gave an office and storage space, in 1947, to District Nurse, Clementina Haynes of the VNA.¹²⁰

1950s, a New Bowling Alley

Housing starts, in Hamilton, boomed in the 1950s,⁴⁸ bringing many new families and increasing Community House activities.

An early sign of many young families coming to the area was a "group of local mothers" requesting to use a basement room, three mornings a week, to hold kindergarten classes. The Board approved the request and charged only a dollar a day.¹³²

The closeness of the community house to a grammar school provided many opportunities, in the future, for the CSHW to offer various programs for bringing kindergarten children together before and after school.

CSHW made several interior changes to the building to allow for these programs.

The pool table was refurbished, in 1950, and put back in the basement game room.¹²¹ (*It is not known when CSHW removed the pool table.*)

Further, CSHW gave that year, a free office, in the Emily Mandell Room, for use by the Visiting Nurses Association.¹²⁰

CSHW also built, in 1950, a room, on the south end of the former bowling alley, to be a Boy Scouts meeting center.^{121, 143}

For summer comfort, the community house only had ceiling fans. However, the lack of air conditioning did not affect attendance at the movie nights. The average attendance was 205/week.^{118, 119}



Location of community house, next to a park and grammar school, boosted its being a childcare support center.

Photo, Google, 2021



Dinner for Edwin Sanford, Scout Master for 25 years, in main hall. Photo, Hamilton Historical Society



Patton Park grill built in 1954 with funds from the Community House. Photo, JHauck, 2021

A large number of people, in November 1951, attended a testimonial dinner, in the main hall, for Edwin Sanford. He had retired after 25 years as the Scoutmaster for Hamilton's Boy Scouts.¹⁸³

There also was large attendance, in the early 1950s, when Santa Claus came to town. CSHW began hosting an annual children's visit with the jolly old man. Often, Santa met with more than 100 joyful children.

Well attended, in April 1952, was CSHW's presentation of the Gilbert and Sullivan operetta, *The Mikado*, by the combined high school boys' and girls' glee clubs. There was a capacity audience.²⁰

A Halloween party was another popular annual event, that began in the 1950s. In 1954, more than 200 children attended for fun and snacks, in the main hall,¹³⁵

Once again the country's future became clouded in the 1950s. Cold war fears and the threat of nuclear war led to the designation of fallout shelters and the building of home shelters. The Community house's thick, sturdy brick walls, were a key factor, in 1952, to its being designated a fallout shelter, along with the town hall and the American Legion Post 194 headquarters.²⁰

Concern for helping local people during possible attacks led Hamilton to strengthen its first aid services. Members of Hamilton's Auxiliary Police, in 1952, became first aid instructors and conducted classes at the community house.

During a week-long blood-typing program, at The Community House, nurses tested 650 residents.²⁰ The town's concern for residents' health also led the Board of Health to arrange for free X-rays, at the community house, during the week of Mar. 21, 1954. All local inhabitants, over 15 yr., were eligible. A large number of people participated.²¹

To assist people in knowing current programs at the Community House, CSHW installed, in 1954, two enclosed bulletin boards on the portico wall, one on each side of the statue and plaque.¹⁴¹ They replaced previous open sign boards, on which weather

affected paper announcements.

1954 saw the movie program reach a major milestone. The 100,000th ticket was sold to Earl Faulkner of Hamilton.¹⁶⁶

The success of the movie program helped pay for a barbecue grill built in Patton Park, which the town dedicated to Mrs. Beatrice Patton. Donations were taken at CSHW movies.¹⁴¹

Bowling income became strong following the installation of automatic pinsetters. From November 1953 to January 1954, there were more than 8,000 strings of bowling, for a dime.¹⁴⁸

Installation, in 1954, of a candy vending machine at the bowling alley reduced the work of volunteers issuing shoes to bowlers handling ticket sales, and selling snacks.^{122, 142}

But all was not sweet that year for the bowling alley. Flooding in the basement bowling alley, in August 1954, dislodged the wood boards from the floor, resulting in the alley being closed. This happened just after the alley was refurbished and soundproofing installed.¹⁴¹

To pump the water from the basement, CSHW connected its drainage system to a system on the Anderson property, on the other side of Main Street.⁷⁴ It emptied into the Miles River.¹³⁰

This was a short-lived solution to the water problem. Hamilton, in 1957, built a drainage system, with sewers, along Asbury Street and allowed CSHW, for \$300, to connect a line to the system from one of its drainage wells.¹²⁵

Affecting CSHW, in 1955, was the recognition by voters, at the Town Meeting, of Bessie P. Cutler of Wenham for her many years of community service. She received a gift of \$500, to be used for the good of the communities, at her discretion.

In her letter of thanks, Cutler said, "Knowing how much bowling means to every age, I offered the money, you so generously gave me, to pay for the major part of the of pinsetter machines, so once again bowling, at The Community House of Hamilton and Wenham, will be available for everyone."¹⁰



CSHW annual fair switched, in 1956, from community house front lawn to Patton Park

Photo, TCH, 2020.

Any question about what happened to the books originally in the library was answered in 1956. CSHW cleared storage from an attic, above the north wing. In particular, there were many old books. A local book store bought them.¹⁶⁶

The need for more space for its annual fair led CSHW to switch, in 1956, from the community front lawn, where it began before 1940, to Patton Park. The fair later became part of the July 4th holiday and was extended to a three-day event,⁹⁴ featuring a large bonfire, which firemen built with old wood barrels, and fireworks. In his 1985 talk about the community house's history, CG claimed that "One year alone, it attracted more than 20,000 people."^{1, 10}

CSHW, in 1956, increased the amount of electrical power in the meeting house. Both the movies and the bowling alley needed more power. The project also included the replacement of the backup gas lamps with electrical lights.¹²³



Bowling alley on west side of the Community House, built in 1962.

Drawing.



Former connection between community house and bowling alley.

Photo, JHauck, 2022

The 1956 CSHW minutes have the first mention of a theatrical play performed at the meeting house; it was in November 1956. The Spotlighters, a group of performers from the Newburyport area, presented *The Late George Apley*, a comedy about Boston brahmin.¹⁴⁵ CSHW received \$355, from the two-night performances.^{134, 18}

CSHW, also in 1956, replaced the flagpole and refurbished the fieldstone base. While not recorded in the minutes, a new flag likely was added.¹⁶⁶

Also in 1956, the CSHW board approved the rehabilitation, "as soon as possible," of the old 4-lane alley. It was to have a new concrete floor and be partitioned for storage space.¹⁴³

However, once again lack of funding became a problem. CSHW halted, in 1957, the plans for refurbishing the old alley. Instead, CSHW announced it would build a new 46,000 sq. ft. bowling building, on Asbury Street.⁶

Money to build the new single-story structure, having eight automated lanes, came from donations, including the \$500 from Bessie Cutler, and a mortgage Hamilton House, took on the community house.⁸³

The new alley, built on the west side of the property, next to the railroad track, was 206 x 54 ft. To connect the new alley to the community house, CSHW built a wing (*connector*) to the bowling alley and behind the south wing's west ell. It had lights, but no heat.

CSHW, seeking to increase funds from the new alley, asked the Hamilton selectmen for permission to open the bowling alley on Sundays. State law prohibited businesses from being open on the Lord's Day, unless licensed by the local government. Hamilton voters, in 1958, approved a license "for the operation of bowling alleys on the Lord's day between the hours of 1 and 11 p.m."³³

1960s, Population Doubled

In 1960, the population of Hamilton and Wenham was about 8,300, about twice the 1950 combined population. This presented a major challenge to CSHW: How to provide services to so many, in a building that was the same size as it was in 1921?

Providing services was not just a matter of the increased number of users. Preferences and needs also changed. In the course of the 50 years since CSHW began, the demographics of Hamilton and Wenham greatly changed. Large estates, farming and small businesses no longer were the major employers; both men and women had jobs outside the home and had long commutes; children were a greater number of the residents, and a large number of residents were not born in Hamilton or Wenham, nor had they attended its schools.⁴⁸

Movie nights and Saturday matinees for children were often at capacity. CSHW installed new projection equipment and all the movies were in color.

The automated bowling alley often was at capacity. Many individuals and league bowlers became major contributors to CSHW's cash needs. In addition to bowling fees, bowlers rented shoes. Through 1960s, CSHW used a portion of the proceeds from bowling to pay off the 1958 mortgage." 1, 10

At its height, in the 1950s and 60s, on average there were more than 2,500 bowling games a month. 124 With the alley being very active, it required full-time supervision and maintenance, CSHW appointed, in 1961, Lawrence Stone as manager of the bowling alley and gave all his duties at the community house to Chester Harvey. 153

A large number of bowlers often parked in the area beside the bowling building and the community house. Further, many also parked on the Patton Park lot, on the other side of Asbury Street.

To meet the needs of the growing teenage population, the basement game room, in 1964, became a Youth Center. Open Friday and Saturday evenings and Sunday and Saturday afternoons, it was "the place" to get together. Attendance regularly was about 80. A major attraction was the pool table. Dances were every other Friday evening. Originally supported financially by the CSHW, the Center became self-supported in 1968 and began paying a rent of \$25/mon. 101, 153, 159

In 1965, Bessie P. Cutler, who had failed in 1947 in getting the insurance amount for the community house increased, paid (about \$11,000) for the installation of fire prevention sprinklers to replace the fire extinguishers. 1, 157 This was one of the earliest installations of these systems, in Hamilton.

The new system helped the main hall remain a popular site for weddings and receptions. Local caterers provided food and beverages.

A major 1960s event was the building of a Patton Park swimming pool, by the Hamilton American Legion Post 194. Opened in 1962, it did not immediately affect the community house, but with time, a strong tie developed. 24.

Several large groups, in the 1960s, began leasing the main hall, even though it did not have air conditioning. 161 A bridge tournament leased (\$15/night) the hall, in September 1963. 153 The Hamilton Council on Aging, which had a museum in the town hall auditorium, began, in April 1966, leasing the hall for social events. 32

In 1967, the need for more space led CSHW to reconsider refurbishing the former basement bowling alley. However, with an estimated cost of \$14,000, the plan again was delayed. 156

Water problems returned in 1967. The sump pumps added in 1954 were unable to prevent basement flooding. CSHW temporarily closed the youth center area. 75 More sump pumps were added. The pumps drain basement water to a catch basin, on the parking lot, from which the water goes to a sewer on Asbury Street. 65

Assistance in meeting maintenance needs came, in 1969, from the Lions Club. Members, whose credo is, "To Encourage service-minded people to serve their community without personal financial reward." Volunteers painted the walls and installed new lights in the main hall. 128

1970s, a Changed Town

The 1970s brought more challenges to the services provided at the community house. Challenges that would require new programs and updated facilities.

In 1970, single-family homes constituted about 88% of all dwelling units in Hamilton. 48 The town 257 new homes between 1970-1980, 8 with a record number (39), built in 1976. 43

By 1971, Hamilton, through new home construction, had lost about 40% of the agricultural land that existed in 1951 while the amount of urban land, that was used for homes, businesses and transportation, increased more than 200% 20. 8

The growth in single-family homes resulted in a 40% increase in the school population from 1960 to 1970. 23, 28 Concomitant with the towns' need for more classrooms came the need for pre- and after-school care for children.

Not surprising, considering these increases, was a House Committee report that the community house, in 1969, served 44 organizations and 627 meetings were held, with nearly 70% youth related. 150

Adding to the need for services for children was the arrival, in Hamilton 1970, of Gordon-Conwell College. 28 There was an influx of families, with young children.

Coming to the aid of CSHW's youth-related services were students from Gordon College, in Wenham. Under the direction of a Gordon instructor, they began a youth program at "the place, in October. 152

Community Services	
Service	Began
Adult education	1922
American Legion	1946
Anniversaries	<1950
Baseball	1946
Birthdays	<1940
Bowling	1922
Boy Scouts	1950
Card games	1963
Child care	1984
College courses	1924
Concerts	1922
Cooking classes	1923
Dancing classes, children	<1970
Dancing lessons, adults	1991
Dances	1925
Exercise	<1930
Fairs	1935
Family care	1984
Girl scouts	<1990
Health care	1922
Holiday meetings	1935
Movies	1922
Red Cross	1942
Rotary meetings	1991
School programs	1925
Senior programs	1971
Skiing	1972
Shooting	1935
Social gatherings	1922
Special needs programs	1988
Theater presentations	1956
Visiting Nurses	1950
Weddings	<1940
Youth meetings	1964

Hamilton, in 1971, established a Youth Conservation Commission to “discern the needs of the youth of Hamilton, and to provide programs to meet those needs,” and “draw together community agencies, which work with young people”²⁵ The Commission's support was in both financial contributions and help of its members and associates. In the first year, Christmas and Halloween parties were held at the community house.

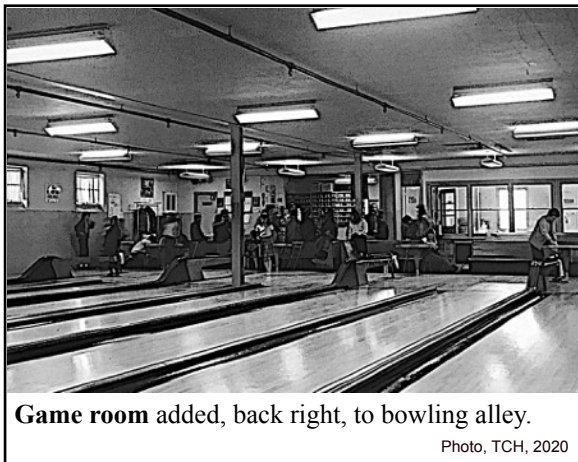
CSHW introduced a new fundraising program, in 1971. Letters were sent to affluent residents requesting donations that CSHW would match, with donations from other local residents. From an initial mailing of sixty, CSHW received promises of about \$3,500. Other residents of the two towns met the contributions from the affluent.¹⁶³ CSHW did not use the program again due to the large amount of time needed to get the matching funds.

Changes, at the community house, continued in 1972. Lawrence Stone, a founding member of the Youth Commission, retired.¹⁶³ Barbara Rigol became CSHW's Executive Director. She remained on the town's Youth Commission. The community house began working with the Youth Commission, in providing movies on Friday nights.⁶¹

Also, beginning in 1972, the Youth Commission, assisted the CSHW in arranging skiing at Clarks Hill, on Moulton Street, in Hamilton. Buses, from the community house, brought skiers to and from the hill, locally called the “bump,” which had four slopes and two tow lines. Skis were stored in the former rifle range, under the portico.^{1, 10}

CSHW decided, in 1972, that the bowling program, needed new management. Metro-Bowl, Inc., Peabody, Metro Bowl was hired to operate, maintain and service the Asbury Street bowling building, starting in 1973.^{171, 172, 100}

One of the first recommendations from Metro Bowl was to add a game room with coin-operated games, including air hockey, pinball and a pool table.¹⁷⁴ The town approved the gaming machines,¹⁵⁸ which became very popular and a new income source for CSHW.



The community house, in addition to offering a place to enjoy the fun of competition, also provided a place of relaxed camaraderie. In 1974, elderly residents, of the two towns began a drop-in center. Calling themselves the “Golden Agers,” they did not seek the joys of life depicted in the Baroque painting, “The Golden Age,” by Italian painter Pietro da Cortona. The Golden Agers wanted to get together for coffees, with guest speakers.^{164, 158}

The bowling alley area had not been used for over a decade. To make it useable again, a call went out for volunteers, supplies and funds. The 52-year-old community house basement was soon ready for the 60 and over-crowd. In 1974, the Hamilton Council on Aging hosted, on Tuesday and Friday afternoons, get-togethers in the hall, for about a hundred. Activities, were book reviews, arts and crafts, lectures, hot lunches and bus trips.^{26, 47}

Certainly one of the most unusual events ever hosted by CSHW was, in 1974, when the community house became a haunted house. For a week in October, ghosts cried out to visitors to the basement. Unfortunately, the event was too scary for some children: the haunted house did not continue.¹⁷⁵

The new CSHW programs greatly increased expenses. The original was the economic engine, volunteers, and large private donations were sufficient. Fifty years later, program fees were the main income source and volunteers were few. While some programs were successful in the early 1970s, overall, income was greatly down.

At the 1975 Annual Town Meeting, a speaker said, “As you all know, there has been some financial trouble at the H-W community house. There is a very real possibility that the doors will close unless the communities contribute to their upkeep.”⁴³

Coming again to the aid of the CSHW was the local Lions Club. In 1977, the Lions installed new lights in the main hall and also refurbished the old bowling alley ceiling.¹³¹

The financial decline continued in 1977. The Hamilton Council on Aging drop-in center, begun just three years earlier, ended.²⁷ The Council continued supporting CSHW programs. In October 1977, when it served dinner to 180 senior citizens.³⁵

Another financial setback in the 1970s was a drop-off in bowling, a major income source, saw. The public's interests were changing; malls, movies and bowling alleys, in other towns, became favorite places for entertainment. Hoping to strengthen the bowling alley attendance, in the summer months, CSHW installed air conditioning.¹³³

All was for naught.

By the late 70s, there were few bowlers at the Asbury Street lanes and the building was deteriorating. In 1979, the bowling lanes closed.¹³⁶ The CSHW informed the Hamilton House that “it no longer desired that building for any purpose.”^{1, 10}

Financial support, in 1979, from Hamilton and Wenham, was small. In both towns, for the third year in a row, the Finance Committees advised voters not to vote for money for the community house, saying it was not appropriate to give public funds for the support of a private organization. But, voters united and voted for funds: \$2,120 from Wenham and \$3,180 from Hamilton. ¹⁰⁷

Voter support may have come from the many people involved with the community house. In 1979, about 12,000 people took part in its programs. ¹⁴⁶

Additional financial support came, in 1979, when Beverly Hospital began renting a large part of the former bowling building for medical offices. ^{107,129, 136}

The closing of the bowling alley building was sad news for the Hamilton-Wenham Chronicle newspaper, which had wanted to move there from an office in Ipswich. However, CSHW created a room in the community house that it leased to the newspaper. The room, in the north wing, previously was a toilet. CSHW converted it to a small office for the Chronicle editor and reporter. ⁵³

This was a short stay: the Chronicle left in 1982, moving to an office on Railroad Ave. ⁵⁶ The paper's former office became a storage space for the many chairs and tables used for special events in the adjoining hall.

A new income source arrived, in 1979. The Rod & Gun Club of Hamilton & Wenham rented the old basement bowling alley. They refurbished the area and installed sound insulating materials. ¹²⁹

The 1979 membership mailing gained about \$5,071. ¹⁸⁷ There still was some financial trouble at the H-W community house, but the ebb flow appeared to have been halted. In 1979, about 15,500 people visited the community house. ¹⁶⁷

1980s, To Be or Not to Be

On the strength of the strong use of the community house in 1979, CSHW hoped its 1980 membership mailing, to about 2,600, would result in a strong return of 50% more than the \$5,000, in 1979. ¹⁶⁷

Helping CSHW's finances, in 1980, was the Hamilton Driving School's leasing the large room below the stage. ¹⁷⁶ Another major financial boost came, in 1981: an anonymous donation of \$19,000, of which CSHW used \$10,000 to pay off its loan for the Asbury Street bowling alley. ¹⁶⁸

CSHW's end-of-year financial reports, from the 1950s to the 1970s, showed operating expenses slightly exceeding income. Little or no money went toward repairs and refurbishing. Projected costs for such projects were well above the organization's ability. A much-needed maintenance project was the prevention of basement flooding, for which the estimated cost was more than \$14,000. ¹⁵⁶

The community house, in 1980, on the inside, was much like it was in 1922. There still were just two toilets, one in both the north wing and south

wing ells. On the outside, there was an empty former bowling alley, on the south side; and, on the north side, a partially rented former bowling alley.

The early 1980s saw CSHW increase its **working** with other community service organizations.

In November 1981, CSHW hosted, with the Hamilton-Wenham Arts Council, an art exhibit. ²⁹ The Council assists in obtaining state funds for arts, humanities, and interpretive science projects to benefit Hamilton and Wenham residents.

Also in 1981, Young Life, a national organization begun in 1941, moved to an office in the basement.

Next, in 1982, Hamilton residents Terry Jennings and Joanne Patton collaborated to create the Special Friends program, to serve the needs of North Shore adults with disabilities. ⁸⁰ They hosted free monthly gatherings of adults with intellectual challenges, trained teachers and volunteers to share activities, including music, dancing and art. ⁸⁰

Friday night movies returned to the community house in 1983. Jointly run by the Hamilton-Wenham Recreation Department and the CSHW, the renewed program began with a showing of Jaws. Tickets were a dollar. ¹⁶⁰

The Hamilton Youth Commission also continued supporting, CSHW's programs, including the Halloween and Christmas parties, the Job Opportunities Program, camp physical exams, and Tough Love.

Supervision of programs changed in 1983. Barbara Rigol retired, after 11 years, as the CSHW Executive Director. ¹ The CSHW board hired Marie Saunders, who had a background in non-profit management. ^{1, 10} The appointment of people with special skills and experience continued, in 1983. A new Community Service President, Joanne H. Patton began a Capital Campaign. She led efforts to establish a capital reserves fund. ¹

Patton ran a non-profit consultant service that recruited marketing consultants, trainers, and speakers for nonprofit organizations. She also co-founded Ready, Willing ... Enable, which made films for local TV. The RW/E films depict the advances in assistive technology and in meeting quality of life issues, for the disabled. ⁷⁸

At the forefront of issues facing the new president was addressing the many years of deferred maintenance. Extensive major repair work was needed.

Of particular concern was the former bowling alley on the building's south side. A 1983 House Committee report said it was "in deplorable condition" and that water, collected there, flowed into the boiler room. The Committee recommended everything be removed and the area filled and planted over. The expected cost was \$7,500. ¹⁴⁴

At its Feb. 28, 1983 Board Meeting, CSHW decided to continue using the community house for "one more year, hoping that the efforts of a study committee and the possible awareness of the townspeople might improve the situation." ^{1, 10}

The Community Service Board, in January 1984, began a fund drive to “upgrade efficiency and safety, produce effective programs and improve the appearance at the community house.”^{169, 137}

By April 1984, the Capital Campaign received donation promises for \$100,000.^{1, 10} CSHW also took a mortgage to help pay for refurbishing costs.¹ Financial help also came from the Hamilton Youth Conservation Commission. In 1984, the Commission bolstered the movie nights program, when it provided improved sound equipment.³¹

Despite tough economic conditions, CSHW continued its popular programs. An annual Halloween party, in the main hall, grew in size.²⁹ It developed as stories of tainted candy and fruit began to alarm parents. Generally, more than a hundred attended the community house event.

A new program, in 1984, which was small at first, would soon develop into a widening of CSHW’s vision of community services, to include special family support programs. CSHW began hosting, School’s Day Out, a program for school children left at home, with no supervision, because both of their parents were at work.^{1, 109} The so-called latchkey kids.

School’s Out accepted children, 5 to 14. The first year, classes, were on Wednesday afternoons, in the basement room below the library. In 1985, classes were from Monday to Friday. Hamilton’s Youth Conservation Commission provided funds for equipment.^{1, 189}

The term latchkey kid became commonplace in the 1970s and 1980s, to describe members of Generation X who, according to a 2004 marketing study, “went through its all-important, formative years as one of the least parented, least nurtured generations in U.S. history.”

In 2008, School’s Day Out merged with the YMCA. Donna Whipple and Marie Saunders brought the program, to the community house. Previously, it was at the town library on Main Street.

In the 1980s and forward, CSHW introduced many special programs in support of the pre- and after-school programs. Some had very creative names; Father-Daughter Winter Ball, Mother-Son Knight Out, and Royal Princess Affair.

Another new program, in 1984, was Tough Love, which assisted parents who were having difficulties in dealing with teenage children. Supported by Hamilton’s Youth Conservation Commission, the group met Wednesday evenings.³¹

Assistance from local organizations came again, in 1985. Lions Club members painted the walls and ceiling of entryways, in both wings.¹⁰⁵

Also in 1985, a problem occurred with one of CSHW’s most popular programs. Skiing at Clarks Hill in Hamilton, a program for more than 30 years stopped.⁴¹ Typically, CSHW leased five buses to bring about skiers to the hill.⁶⁵



Skiing returned, in 1986, when CSHW bused 4th to 8th graders to Haverhill.

CSHW began a new skiing program, in 1986. It brought 4th to 8th graders to Haverhill, for skiing on Bradford Hill. During the winter, for six weeks, every Wednesday, buses left the community house, after school, and returned around 6:30 pm.

Helping get the program running again was CSHW’s improved financial status. Through efforts led by CSHW President, Joanne H. Patton, who retired in 1986. CSHW reported that its finances were “in the black for the first time in several years.”¹¹¹

The improved finances also allowed CSHW to address maintenance issues. The main hall and library interior lighting improved with the replacement of fluorescent lights hanging from ceilings with recessed and track lights. The switch provided more even lighting. Air conditioning was beyond CSHW’s financial ability, so, paddle fans were hung from the main hall’s ceiling.¹⁷⁸

In 1986, to comply with State and Federal laws requiring the first floor of the community house to be fully handicap accessible, CSHW built handicapped ramps. Lights were installed on the walkways around the building.⁶⁵ Also, all the toilets became handicap accessible.¹⁷⁹

Two other significant changes, in 1986, were:

1) Hamilton’s Youth Conservation Commission ended, in 1986. It had been involved, since 1971, with various programs at the community house, including the Christmas and Halloween parties, movies nights, rifle and pistol instruction, Tough Love, and various after-school activities.³²



Handicapped ramp and easily opened door locks and lights were installed by walkways around the building, in 1986.

Photo, JHauck, 2022

2) Marie Saunders, in 1986, resigned as CSHW' Director. There followed two brief directors, until 1988 when CSHW hired Elizabeth "Betty" Sweet.¹⁰

A new program, in 1986, was a concert series, in the main hall, followed by receptions with the artists, in the adjoining library.¹⁸⁹ There have been few programs, over the years, that have used the library.

A large boost to HSCS' finances, in January 1987, came from the sale of the former bowling alley building and property to Beverly Hospital. At the time, CSHW needed about \$2,500/mon to keep the building operating.¹⁷³ The building (122 x 54 ft.) was on a 16,359 sq. ft. lot.⁵⁴ Hamilton House, Inc. invested proceeds from the sale in an endowment, for maintenance of the community house.^{1, 10}

Beverly Hospital, to create doctors' offices, refurbished and converted the interior of the former bowling alley and increased parking area. The new owner also removed the door linking the buildings and built a walkway between the buildings.⁶¹

The Hospital gave CSHW: non-exclusive rights to the strip of land between the two buildings; rights to the 20-car lot, as long as it "was run for charitable purposes that benefit the residents of the towns of Hamilton and Wenham;"^{61, 54} and an easement that allowed its utility lines (*water and septic*) to cross the hospital's property and access the leaching field, on the property's northwest corner.⁵⁴

A new income source developed in 1987, when CSHW began, in the basement, an annual used ski, and skates sale and "ski and skate swap." Mostly offering equipment children outgrew, the sale included downhill and cross country skis, boots and poles; ice skates, hockey equipment, snowboards and boots and snowshoes, but no clothing. In 1996, the sale netted CSHW about \$1,300.⁵⁸

Finances took a turn for the worse, in 1987. Movies, then run by the Hamilton Youth Commission, stopped,³² ending the original two major sources of CSHW's income, bowling and movies.

Of major health importance, in 1988, was the re-

moval of asbestos insulation from pipes in the basement.¹²⁷ The EPA banned its use in 1975.

During 1987 and 1988, the community house hosted 29 programs, and more than 100 events, that were held by Al-Anon, Bible study, Brownies, Bridge Club, Golden Agers, Gun and Rifle Club, Lions, Mothers Club, Scouts (*boys and girls*), Young Life, as well as the CSHW staff and committees.¹²⁷

CSHW's finances, in 1989, were greatly strengthened. Hamilton House gave the money from the sale to Beverly Hospital of the Asbury Street bowling alley to CSHW, which placed the funds in a Mandell Memorial Fund, for maintenance, repairs and refurbishing of the community house.¹⁷⁷

1990s, A New Bowling Alley

The character of the two towns greatly changed in the 1990s. The under-18 population in Hamilton increased more than 25% during the 1990s, compared to only 10.9% statewide and 14.9% in Essex County overall. Hamilton ranked 11th out of 34 Essex County towns for the growth rate, among pre-school and school-age children.⁴⁸

A significant change from the past was that both parents, in many homes, were employed. This resulted in a reduction of CSHW volunteers. In 1990, to renew volunteering, the federal government created the Commission on National and Community Service (CNCS) and charged it with supporting community services, including programs for school-aged children; higher education service programs; and establishing a youth corps.

CSHW's interest in providing health programs continued in 1990, when it held two clinics to immunize elderly and high-risk residents. In the main hall: nurses immunized 249 people.³⁴

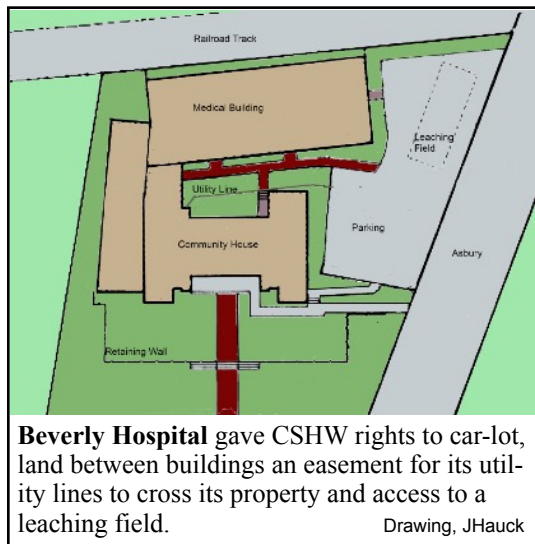
Not continuing was the Halloween party, after about 40 years, ended in 1990, when Hamilton stopped funding it.¹⁸⁴

CSHW completed several capital improvement projects in 1990. These included: the removal of an underground oil tank;¹⁸⁶ installing hot water in the toilets,¹⁸⁶ and installing a new furnace, with both an oil and gas burner.¹⁸⁵

In 1991, another Hamilton service organization began using the community house. Local merchants and professionals formed a Rotary Club chapter to focus on fundraising needs. Members met for breakfast meetings, on Fridays at 7:30 a.m.¹⁸⁰

A new program for children began in August 1992. CSHW offered a 4-week program of acting classes. Geared for children seven and older classes were on Tuesday mornings.¹⁸²

A "major liability" for CSHW, at the start of the 1990s, was the abandoned former bowling alley on the south side. A study committee stated the structure was "extremely unsafe," steadily failing (*plywood covered holes in the roof*), and a drain on heating costs.¹⁵⁴



Addition Built in 1992



Three skylights on back of addition roof Photo, Google, 2021



Shed next to addition, built by Boy Scout in 2012. Photo, JHauck, 2022



No windows in walls of addition's back section. Photo, JHauck, 2022



Equipment storage area, beside addition, has equipment shed and a backup electric generator.

Photo, JHauck, 2022



Patio entrance, back of addition. Photo, JHauck, 2022



Patio behind the south wing.

Photo, JHauck, 2022

To increase space for its programs, Hamilton House, in 1992, built a single-story 27-ft. wide, 71-ft. long annex, having two sections. ¹⁸¹ Unlike other sections of the community house, both have a flat roof, not gabled peaks (*likely done to reduce construction costs*).

The 44-ft. long front section is partway into the south wing, which was only 20 ft. from the property line. A foyer in the front section replaced an office, toilet and lobby, in the south wing. ¹⁸¹

The front section has red brick facing, a 3-ft. high false front and a basement. All the window panes are thermal-insulating double-pane glass. ⁸³ In the front section has a lobby, offices, stairs to a basement, a 4 x 5-ft. wheelchair elevator, a kitchenette, stairs to the lower back section and two handicap-accessible toilets. As part of the \$195,000 project, CSHW replaced its 70-year-old septic system. ¹⁸¹

A single basement room, in the front section, was not changed.

CSHW converted the 57 ft. long back section, the former bowling alley, into function space, that is sub dividable into three areas. ¹⁸¹ It does not have a basement and is 8 ft. lower than the front section and is partially below ground level. There are no windows on both side walls, however, there are three skylights.

The kitchenette, in the front section, has a door to the back section.

The annex has upright steam-heated radiators. As part of the annex project, CSHW changed to gas for heating the boiler in the basement of the center building. This reduced heating costs

A door, on the side of the back section, connects to the former connection wing. Heated offices were built in the former connector.

Another door, at the back of the back section, leads to a small lattice-fence-enclosed patio. Railroad tracks are behind the patio fence.

The annex is 9 ft. from the south property line. The area has two equipment sheds and a backup electric generator.

Funds from selling the bowling alley building covered much of the annex cost. ⁶⁵ However, money

also came from the “movies man,” Scott Libby, who for many years was the projectionist. He died in 1994, when he was 98. In his will, Libby left the CSHW a very generous financial bequest. ^{1, 10}

Funds from the sale of the bowling alley also were used to refurbish the cupola. The wood railing on the deck was removed and the cupola repainted.

The range of groups using the community house increased in 1993. The first ethnic group to regularly use the community house was the Birka Lodge 732, VASA Order of America a Swedish American Fraternal Organization. Birka Lodge began meeting monthly at the community center, in December 1993 and began hosting an annual Yule Fair, on the Saturday after Thanksgiving. ⁶⁵

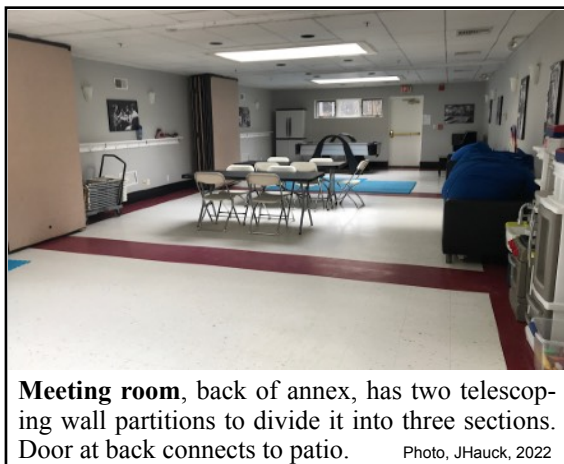
One of the eight WWI servicemen commemorated on the plaque at the front of the community house was Frank Emil Nelson. He was born May 13, 1891, in Hemsjo, Sweden. In 1917, he and his wife, Ragnhild Derby, settled in Wenham, on Larch Row. ⁷

Further increased use of the community house happened in 1996, as a result of the school system initiating a 2-1/2 day schedule for kindergarten students. CSHW responded by beginning a School's Out Kindergarten Enrichment program. ¹⁰ It began with two small classes in the Mandell Room. In 1999, School's Out added an Adventure School and a Young Scientists program. The State-licensed School's Out to accept up to 58 children. ¹⁰

In November 1998, the School's Out program was incorporated to limit the liability of its directors, ⁶

Some relief in expenses began in 1998, when CSHW, eighteen years after mortgaging the community house to build the bowling alley building, finished paying the mortgage. ¹

A year later, in late 1999, Hamilton House, Inc., deeded the mortgage-free community house to CSHW, Inc., thereby ending its responsibility for the building's maintenance and modernization expenses. Charles G. Rice, the President, agreed to the transfer. ^{1,10, 69} (*Thirteen years later, on Jun. 18, 2012, Hamilton House was dissolved with the dissolution of its 1920 incorporation.*⁵⁵)



Meeting room, back of annex, has two telescoping wall partitions to divide it into three sections. Door at back connects to patio. Photo, JHauck, 2022



Kitchen, refurbished in 2002. Photo, JHauck 2022

2000s, Population Tripled

In 2000, Hamilton added 547 housing units, mostly single-family homes. This brought the total to 2,825, of which 80% were families and 42% had children under 18. On both counts, Hamilton exceeded state norms: 65% of all Massachusetts households were families and 30% had children under 18.⁴⁸

Hamilton's population was about 8,300; 3 times the 1950 population. Wenham's was about 4,500, 280% more than what it was in 1950. Hamilton's 18 and under population increased more than 25%, in the 1990s. Statewide the growth was 10.9% statewide and 14.9% in Essex County.⁴⁸

Not only had the population of the towns changed. CSHW's sources of income were different. Childcare and performing arts replaced bowling and movie nights, as the main sources of funds. Administrative details, in September 2001, nearly brought childcare to a halt. Massachusetts ≈

Administrative details, in September 2001, nearly brought childcare to a halt. Massachusetts Division of Industrial Accidents noticed one of School's Out 1998 formation errors: it had no worker's compensation coverage. Paperwork was filed and a School's Out Board was established. With the separation, Community Service and School's Out had separate boards, budgets and books.^{1, 10}

In 2002, the State licensed School's Out to have 84 children, in the building, after school, each weekday afternoon. Kindergarten children classes, which served nearly 60 families. contributed almost \$80,000 to CSHW, in 2002.^{1, 10}

CSHW began a series of free summer concerts, at the Patton Park bandstand. They ran eight consecutive Sunday evenings and often drew more than a hundred people, who sat on blankets and chairs they brought.

Seeing the increased level of activity at the community house, the owner of the former bowling alley building, in 2002, contacted CSHW about leasing space. Four of the five units, in what was then a medical/dental condominium, soon would be available. CSHW unsuccessfully tried to buy, rather than rent the building.^{1, 10}

In October 2003, Lahey Clinic vacated the building and moved to the Willowdale office park, on Wil-

low Street. In 2005, the property was sold and renovated and in 2006, Patton Park Medical opened.^{1, 10}

From their inability to reacquire the bowling alley building, School's Out and the CSHW realized that they were very inter-dependent: the building's location being very important for School's Out and the income important to Community Services.^{1, 10}

The CSHW also realized that the building needed air conditioning. In late 2000, nearly fifty years after its introduction, the community house had air conditioning. However, the cooling system served only the main hall and the library.^{1, 10}

With the installation of AC, the community house's function business grew. The main hall and library hosted many weddings, anniversary celebrations, showers and parties.

A Harvest Feast Dinner began in 2002. In preparation for this fund-raising event, CSHW spent \$50,300 refurbishing the kitchen.⁸³ Added were new, burners, enlarged sinks, a new dishwasher, a center service table and ample open space.⁸³

Also in 2002, another new TCH program began. High school choral students hosted a Brown Bag Concert Series, in the main hall.³⁷

To spread the word about its many new programs, CSHW began, in 2004, posting information on the "worldwide web," aka the Internet.⁶⁵ CSHW developed a "bare-bones" website.

In 2005, a potential new source for financial assistance developed. The town created a nine-member Hamilton Community Preservation Act Committee (CPAC). The Committee became a funding source for historical preservation, such as The community house.³⁸

Also in 2005, CSHW added a passageway, at the back of the stage, by hanging a ceiling-to-floor curtain. The passageway connects the kitchen, on the west side, and a storage room, on the east side.⁶⁵

In 2006, CSHW hired a new director, Melissa Elmer. She had been an event planner for Healing Abuse Working for Change (HAWC), in Salem.

A major problem arose, just before her arrival. A rainstorm dropped more than a foot of rain from May 14 to 16: it became known as the Mothers' Day Flood. The community house's sump pumps could not handle the basement flooding. Repairs cost \$20,000.⁷⁹

Governor Romney, after visiting the northshore area, said, "This is a level of crisis, which is beyond anything these communities have ever experienced from water, in their history."

Also in 2006, the Hamilton Council on Aging informed the new Director that they would be leaving the community house, The HCOA moved to the former Hamilton Library building, on Bay Road.

Not leaving the community house was the basement flooding problem. In 2008 and 2010, flooding caused damage. Wood flooring fastened to the concrete floor, and wallboard and trim were replaced.⁶⁵



CSHW began, in 2011, summer concerts at Patton Park bandstand. Photo, Hamilton Historical Society

Sump pumps continued to be the ready answer to the water problem. In 2010, for \$8,100, two sump pits were dug and two pumps put in each (*in case one should fail*).⁵

What do people call the building? There was not a clear answer to a question raised by the CSHW board: What do people call the building?

The name appearing on all the 1922 plans for the new building was the "Memorial Building." However, this name is not in any of the histories of the building, not even the one written by the Mandell grandson, Charles G. Rice, in 1985.⁶⁵

In 1922, the name Hamilton-Wenham Community House was above the portico entrance. However, people called it by many other names, including: the Hamilton House, the Hamilton-Wenham Community Service building and the community service building. CSHW, in 2021, changed the name to "The Community House" (*TCH*).

There also was some confusion about what happened at The Community House. TCH installed, in 2006, a post sign on Bay Road, where drive-bys could learn about current programs.⁶⁵

There was no confusion about the urgent need for refurbishing The community house. TCH began, in 2007, a multi-year refurbishing program, with the repainting of the main hall. All trim, windows, doors, balcony, fixtures and ceiling are white and the walls a light beige (*previously, the walls were a darker beige*). The project cost about \$5,600.⁷³

An engineering study revealed the building's portico needed major refurbishing. In 2008, the Hamilton Community Preservation fund provided \$8,200 for architectural and design plans for the repair of the portico and its underlying structural system.^{39, 63}

In 2009, TCH began implementing the 2008 architectural and design plans for the repair of the portico and building maintenance. Nearly \$300,000 was spent on portico repairs, including a new floor; waterproofing exterior walls; converting portico doors to low-energy handicap openings; and removing lead contamination from the soil and walls of the former shooting range below the portico. Funding came from both Wenham's CPC, which donated \$15,000, over 3 yr.^{36, 65} and Hamilton CPC, \$60,000⁶³

Workers detected the lead contamination while removing the sand-filled areas behind former targets. In 1971, Massachusetts enacted one of the nation's first state lead poisoning prevention laws, The Massachusetts Lead Poisoning Prevention Act.

TCH's focus, in the 2000s, on refurbishing the building, did not detract from its service programs.

In the summer of 2008, TCH started the Special Friends' Art Grows Here program. Its origin was a program Terry Jennings and Joanne Patton started about 20 years earlier. They collaborated to create the Special Friends program to serve North Shore adults with disabilities.⁸⁰

Also in 2008, TCH began a children's music pro-



Music Man, Brian Doser, played the guitar and singing lively music, in the main hall, for the enjoyment of young children. Photo, TCH, 2010

gram. Brian Doser, walked about the main hall, playing a guitar and singing lively music for children, sometimes as many as 80. They could just sit and absorb the music or join in (*in tune or not*). Doser became known as the "music man." (*In 2022, The Music Man Brian Doser went from playing two to three mornings a week.*)

The stage, in the main hall, was only occasionally used for events such as The Libby Fireside Concerts, brown bag lunches, after-school programs, and middle school dances.⁶⁵

Soon after becoming TCH's Executive Director, in 2006, Melissa Elmer suggested expanding the use of the stage, by creating a theater program. As a young person, growing up in Wisconsin, she found participating in theatre programs "provided a creative outlet, where she could be thoroughly engaged, challenged and accepted."¹⁰⁴ She hoped that TCH could become "a place where people could enjoy a similar experience, with a quality performing arts enrichment program that would impact community members, of all ages."¹⁰⁴

In 2008, TCH created a theater a small, in-house theater company that would later become a major TCH program. Called the Cape Ann Community Theater, its goal was to bring together people of all ages and skill levels to work with directors, who could inspire and develop their skills through performances of well-known Broadway plays. Leading the company was Hannah L. Mell, then teaching at Miles River Middle School and living in Beverly.⁶⁵

In 2008, Cape Ann Community Theater's productions were presented at several local churches, including Wenham's and Hamilton's First Congregational Churches, and Hamilton's Christ Church. The company's first production, in December 2008, was Andrew Lloyd Webber's Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat.⁶⁵

There were three productions in 2009, ending in November, with Oscar Wilde's "The Importance of Being Ernest."⁶⁵

Also in 2009, TCH tried to develop a music program for high school students interested in rock, jazz, classical, folk, vocals, and acoustics. Called Performance Space, it was unsuccessful, as was a second effort, called Open Mic, in 2015.⁶⁵

Impacting both towns, in 2009, was TCH's introduction of a two-town block party. Originally held, in late June at the Hamilton-Wenham Library, it started, at 3 pm, with a bike decorating event. At 4 pm, bikers left for Patton Park, escorted by members of the Hamilton Police and Fire Departments.

At the park, there were many amusement rides and games, plus food and drinks. At 9 pm, there were fireworks. In the following years, attendance was as many as 800. The June date was chosen, since many families often traveled during the July 4th holiday.

Theater productions featured many local performers, young and old



2010s, Historic Site

The Community House, which has been cited as one of the best representative examples of the Federalist Revival used in the community during the period,¹⁴⁰ in 2011, became a National Historic Site. Being on the National Historic Site Register (*NHSR*) makes TCH eligible for grants through the Historic Preservation Fund.

In addition, state and local governments offer grant and loan programs for historic preservation. Federal income tax incentives are available for easements and rehabilitation. *NHSR* buildings receive site inspections, which analyze the condition of the site, identify and prioritize treatments and estimate the costs of the work. (*Through 2021, TCH did not apply for NHSR assistance.*⁶⁵)

A year later, 2010, Cape Ann Theater became The Community House Theater, thereby shifting the focus of the ongoing theater program to The Community House. There were three productions.

In 2011, there were no Community House Theater productions, following founding Director, Hannah Mell's stepping down.⁶⁵ However, Open Road Theater rented the hall and stage to produce Sher-

lock Holmes Goes to Hollywood, in April, and Homebody, in September,⁶⁵

During the 2010s, TCH spent about \$750,000, on many refurbishing, maintenance and updating projects.^{65, 81} TCH, in 2011, installed a gas-powered 48,000-kW generator on the south side, next to the 1992 annex, to provide electricity, for most of the building, when a storm disrupts power.⁶⁵

Also on the north side of the annex, a Troop 35 Boy Scout, Ted Hogan, to achieve an Eagle badge, in 2012, built a utility shed, for storing grounds equipment.

Refurbishing the building continued in 2013, with the replacement of the gutters.⁶⁵

In 2013, Community House Theater hired Jay Pension, as the Artistic Director.⁶⁵ He began his leadership with a production, in March, of the Sound of Music, which had professional and community actors from across the North Shore.⁶⁵ Hannah Mell played Maria Von Trapp. (*With this start, TCH might well have asked, "What will my future be?"*)

The balcony, in preparation for the Sound of Music production, became the control center for stage lights and sound.⁶⁵ Also in the small room was the central air conditioning unit, as was an old safe (*no records remain about its use or when placed there*).

First Steps in Music began, in 2013, offering children music classes to develop their musical talent. Classes were once a week, for 6 weeks.

Also in 2013, Community House Theater produced *Seussical Jr.*, directed and choreographed by Kelly Murphy of Beverly.

A year later, 2014, TCH began Teen Workforce. The program offered part-time work to young people, 16 to 20, for up to 10 hrs./mon., at \$14/hr. Massachusetts YouthWorks, begun in 2002, funded the program.¹⁰²

Refurbishing continued in 2014. A project that drew a lot of passer-by attention was the cupola's replacement, using a high crane on a truck. The cupola lasted a long time, considering it was open to rain and snow. The project cost \$105,300.^{29, 85}

Hamilton and Wenham CPC provided funds for several refurbishing projects, including exterior painting and masonry, \$90,000; interior painting, \$3,000; and restoration of the wood floor in the library the hall and stage, \$8,000.

^{65, 81}



Cupola's replacement, in 2014, using a high crane on a truck.

Photo, TCH, 2010



Mary Poppins cast, 2015.

Photo, TCH

Community House Theater, in 2015, became Stage 284. There were two productions. The first was Company. Next, there was Mary Poppins, directed by Myriam Cyr and Jay Pension. (*It was supercalifragilisticexpialidocious.*)

Community House Theater, in 2015, created a theater company for kids, called the Stage 284 Youth Company. Katie Clarke was the first Managing Director. In the three-week program, young people attend classes to gain the confidence, skills and experience needed to succeed in the theater. Students participate in intensive acting, voice, dance classes and rehearsals. "Stage 284" began in January 2016, with a full season of shows, starting with Drowsy Chaperone, in January; followed by Annie Jr., in March; "Nottingham," in April; Little Mermaid, in May, and White Christmas, in December.

These productions were enhanced by track lights TCH installed on the main hall's ceiling, near the stage. The lights illuminated performers, in particular their facial expressions.

Also in 2016, TCH improved the building's structural integrity when it repaired the portico foundation, which had become weakened due to frequent rain-water leakage. Hamilton's CPC approved \$33,500 for the restoration.⁸⁸ Previously, in 2010, Wenham's CPC approved \$10,000, for this project.⁹³

Further financial help came in 2017, when Wenham's CPC approved another \$27,217, for the repair of the window wells beside the parking area on the building's north side.⁸⁹ TCH replaced the basement's original 4-section casement windows, with wider, single and double casement windows.

In 2019, TCH improved the building's heating system and reduced its fuel costs. For these projects, Hamilton's CPC provided a grant of \$100,000.^{28, 73} and \$50,000 came from Wenham's CPC.⁹¹ TCH also added a high-efficiency boiler, in the basement, and a new control system with programmable thermostats.

Also in 2019, refurbishing of TCH's windows, which began in 2015, preserved a key aspects of the original Guy Lowell design, i.e., ample light to the interior. The many types of windows are in accordance with the eclectic character of the Lowell design. TCH has many different window designs, including: vertical, 10-by-10 pane casements, at the front of both wings; rectangular, 6-over-6 pane.



Skylight

Many windows provide ample light to interior ... one of key aspects of the original Guy Lowell design



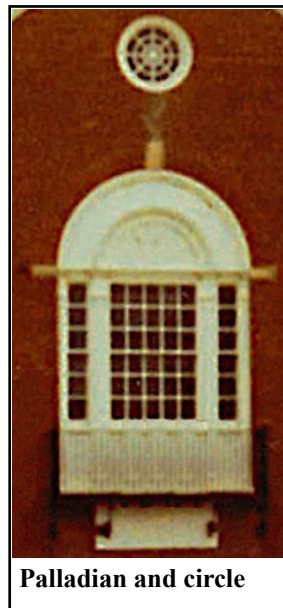
Eyelid dormer



Arched hung



Arched frame



Palladian and circle



Casement, double

sash on the sides and back; bay window on the south side and Palladian on the north side; arched transom windows, above the doors; a circular window above the large window panel, on the north side; and eyebrow windows on the center section roof, front and back. In the main hall, all trim, windows, doors, balcony, fixtures and ceiling were painted gray, in 2019.⁶⁵

As the many facility improvement programs proceeded, TCH continued many of its service programs and added new ones.

In 2017, Move and Groove, a weekly dance program, began.¹⁰⁶

TCH realizing that its programs were also attracting families from nearby towns, in 2018, expanded the area where it offered its programs and services. The original focus, to “provide programs to serve the needs and interests of the people of Hamilton and Wenham, was expanded, to “people of local communities.”⁶⁵

In November 2018, TCH held a special World War I Commemorative program that focused on Hamilton and Wenham’s many efforts, during the war. TCH printed a book, “World War I: Remembering the Heroic Men of Hamilton and Wenham.”^{7•}

In 2018, the Rotary left, moving to Burnham Hall, at the Wenham Museum; and The School’s Out childcare program ended.

However, for childcare, TCH, in August 2019, began Kids Community @284, to provide parents before and after-school childcare options, for children (up to 78), who were at the nearby Winthrop school, in grades K to 5. The program was held before school began (7 am-8:30 am), in the basement game room, Monday to Friday. TCH staff walked Winthrop school students (K-5 grades) before the start of classes to board transfer buses. The program also provided after-school care Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays, from 3 to 6 pm, and Wednesdays, from 12:45 to 6 pm.^{49, 63, 65}

Kids Community @284 used a newly emerging STEAM curriculum of science, technology, engineering, the arts and mathematics. Additional special

programs included yoga, cooking, photography, martial arts, music and theater arts.

Financial assistance for TCH’s arts programs came from several sources. The Hamilton-Wenham Cultural Council, from 2011 to 2019, contributed nearly \$15,000.⁹⁴

Curtain’s Up, a theater program for middle schoolers, began, in 2019, as part of Stage 284’s Youth Studio program.⁶⁵

TCH, in 2019, had a paid staff of 36 people and more than 70 volunteers.⁴⁴

2019 revenues, about \$800,000, mainly came from: events and programs (28%), leases and rents (25%), fundraising (22%), and grants (17%).^{65, 73} More than 700 people contributed.⁴⁴

The success of the in-house theater programs created a parking problem. Cars filled both the 21-car Asbury Street lot and the nearby 34-car Patton Park lot. Also, cars parked on Bay Road, in front of the community house.

2020, Deja Vu

The 2020 population of two towns (about 12,500) was slightly less than the 12,600, in 2010, and nearly five times what it was a century before.^{22, 92} There were about 1,900 children 17 and under, of which 122 were in kindergarten and 31 in pre-kindergarten. As for seniors (65 and older), there were about 1,650.⁹⁵

The Community House, née Hamilton House, in 2020, was 100 years old. The building was now owned by TCH, a private, non-profit corporation of the State of Massachusetts. It was the only non-profit community service organization, on the north shore.^{1, 10}

TCH 2020 building had only a few exterior changes from 1920:

- Name on the frieze, “The Community Center.”
- Single floor annex, to the south wing.
- Small storage building, beside the annex.
- Ramp from the parking lot, to the portico.
- Patio behind the south wing.
- A railing on the cupola is gone.



Game room, below library, originally a pool room. Laundry area, at back, previously was a kitchenette.

Photo, JHauck, 2022



Kids Community @284 room, in basement.

Photo, JHauck, 2022

The building still had a slate roof; one of very few left in the town.

Changes inside included air conditioning, fire sprinklers, a new heating system, six toilets (3 for *handicapped*) and a well-equipped stage.

Reduced funds, due to Covid 19 restrictions, limited refurbishing efforts. No requests were made for Hamilton or Wenham CPC funds.⁴⁰

As for program changes, movies and bowling are gone. Childcare is a major focus. The School's Out program, in 2020, had more than 200 children attending classes, 49 weeks a year.¹

At the start of 2020, Mary Poppins might have repeated what she once said, "What's to happen, all happened before." When CSHW began in 1920, the country was coming out of a major health crisis, the WWI "Spanish" flu, which affected 25% of Americans (105 mil.) and killed nearly 700,000.

In 2020, the country was in the early stage of a deadly virus, Covid 19, so named for having started in 2019. Little was known of the new pandemic. There were no vaccines. People began wearing face masks, and group gatherings, of any kind, were prohibited, striking at the heart of The Community House, as a place of togetherness.^{1, 10}

On Mar. 12, TCH announced it was closing all of its programs and services for two weeks. Before Covid 19, The Community House typically had more than a thousand weekly visitors.

At the time, Stage 284 was in final rehearsals for its next theater presentation, a 1991 Broadway musical, *The Secret Garden*. Also canceled was a performance of *Frozen*, by Stage 284's youth company.⁶⁵ Along with these income-producing events, TCH lost other major income sources, including Kids Community @ 284, which had only recently started.

TCH furloughed all full- and part-time employees. Being a non-profit corporation, the government required TCH to pay the government half the unemployment money the employees received. TCH received, under the "Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act," aka the CARES Act, received funds for the half it gave to the government.⁶⁵

The two-week suspension of TCH's programs due to Covid 19, ended up being four months. Further, The Community House did not celebrate in 2021, as planned, its 100th anniversary.²⁸

Covid 19 was the cause for canceling winter skiing at Bradford. TCH could not arrange for bus transportation, when the bus company did not have drivers.⁶⁵ Greatly assisting TCH, during the Covid 19 pandemic, was the federal government creating, in 2020, a Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) to help certain businesses, self-employed workers, sole proprietors, certain nonprofit organizations, and tribal businesses continue paying their workers. The program (*through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security*) allowed organizations to apply to the Small Business Administration (SBA) for low-

interest private loans to pay employees and some other costs. The Community House received a \$75,000 PPP loan, from the SBA, in April 2020.⁴⁵

Greatly assisting TCH, during Covid 19 epidemic, was the federal government. In August 2020, the Hamilton Wenham Regional School District and the Hamilton Board of Health announced guidelines for the reopening and operation of schools, during the ongoing pandemic. TCH followed, soon after, restarting many of its programs, following the same guidelines.⁶⁵

Executive Director Melissa Elmer said on TCH's return, "We've relearned how important connections with people, in person, are."¹⁰⁷

Her thoughts echoed those of Marielle Heller, 2019 director of the movie *A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood*, who said, "With all of the bad things that are happening in the world right now, I think we need a message of togetherness and true unity."

During the Covid 19 shutdown, TCH continued its refurbishing of the building, receiving financial help from both Hamilton's and Wenham's CPC. Key projects were the heating system change and installing a video/security system, at all entrances, that operates during childcare hours.⁶

Hamilton's and Wenham's annual town reports show that, from 2010 to 2020, the Wenham and Hamilton CPC, provided more than \$250,000 to TCH for its programs.

A major funds source (28%, in 2014) was TCH's theatrical programs, which used the main hall. It has computer-controlled light and sound systems, ceiling-mounted sound-absorbing panels and a stage with footlights, overhead lighting and floor-to-ceiling curtains. The most recent improvements, are sound absorbing ceiling panels, an anonymous gift, that improve the hall's sound quality.

Over the many years since the end of WWII, a mainstay of TCH's programs has been an annual service awards dinner. In October 2020, TCH hosted, a Harvest Dinner, attended by more than a hundred people. TCH gave Hometown Hero Awards to several people, who provided significant support during the early months of the Covid 19 pandemic.

2021: 100 Years

Following the Covid shutdown, recovery of the TCH programs began, but the recovery went very slowly. Kids Community @ 284, in March 2021, had just slightly more than a couple of dozen enrolled for a September restart. Before the pandemic, the program had more than 90 children. Fifty children is about the financial breakeven point for the program. When schools reopened in September, there were still only 52 enrollments.⁶⁵

Another major income program, Stage 284, also had a slow restart. Its first 2021 production, *Newsies*, with performers wearing face masks, was not until October.⁶⁵ For the 12 performances, the



Farmers Market began, end of 2021, allowed local farmers to sell baked goods, honey and prepared foods. Some merchants had individual tents. Photo, TCH



Canopy required to comply with Covid 19 public distancing requirement. Photo, TCH, 2021

audience sat a seat apart, reducing the capacity from 120 to 80 seats.⁶⁵

At Farmers Market, a new program that began at the end of 2021, local farmers sold baked goods, honey and prepared foods, on Saturdays in November and December, in front of The Community House.

To comply with a Massachusetts Covid 19 public distancing requirement, TCH bought and erected a canopy, in front of the entrance and covered the ground with artificial turf. Some merchants had individual tents. TCH removed the canopy and turf after the last December event.

Other programs continuing, in 2021, were: Friends Club met in the main hall; Music Man, held Monday and Thursday mornings, in the main hall; Patton Park Sunday concerts on Sunday afternoon, July to August; Santa, due to Covid 19 distancing restriction, met children in a tent at Pingree Park.¹⁰⁷ Change did not hold back attendance: 945.⁵⁰

Also, there were independent programs: a walking club, Great Bay Tai Chi and the BIRKA Swedish Lodge annual gathering.

Hamilton issued an edict, affecting all the pro-

grams, on Dec. 21, 2021. The Hamilton Department of Public Health advised all residents, regardless of vaccination status, to wear a mask or face covering, when indoors (*and not in-home*). Exempt from the face coverings requirement were children under 5 years old.

So ended the tough-going 2021.

For the year, revenues were about \$766,700,⁶⁵ of which a large part (19%) came from Covid relief funds. Other general sources were: Kids Community, 29%; fundraising, 24%; events and programs, 19%; grants, 5%; and hall rental, 3%.⁵⁰ Quite a change from the major sources in 1920: bowling, movies and private contributions.

Expenses, in 2021, were about \$672,500.⁶⁵ There also was a major shift in expenses, since 1920. Administration and payroll, in 2021, accounted for 62% of expenses, programs at 17% and building improvements and maintenance at 5%.⁵⁰ In 1920, there were no administration costs, for Emily Mandell paid for the workers.



Location of community house, next to a park and grammar-school, boosted its being a local childcare support center.

Photo, Google, 2021



Building, in 2021, about 20% larger than the original 12,000 sq. ft. structure.

Drawing, JHauck



Centennial Square, a town commons area, envisioned in 2022, to replace original front area.

Photo, TCH, 2022

Effects of the Covid 19 pandemic, in 2021, kept TCH from making building improvements.

However, early in 2022, TCH initiated a plan to create, in front of the building, a town commons area called "Centennial Square.". The plan called for a new patio, with benches and tables, fenced to provide a child-safe area for parents to meet and connect. Also, the walkway to be widened, with engraved bricks, having the names of contributors to the project. TCH dedicated the square on Oct. 1, 2022.

Jack Hauck, February, 2023

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