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# Chicago's Home for the Aged and Infirm Colored People: A Paradigm for Examining Changes in African-American Institutional Support

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## Abstract

*For decades, African Americans, faced with enormous exclusion by the majority population, built hundreds of social institutions to provide basic services for their communities. The history of the Chicago's Home for Aged and Infirm Colored People illustrates changes in African American leadership in community institutions that coincided with shifting demographic patterns and the rise of the Civil Rights movement. Middle class leaders remained committed to the home after migration accelerated and decreasing membership in women's social clubs diminished available resources. Implications for the historical role of the Black middle-class in sustaining community institutions are discussed.*

## Introduction

For decades African-Americans, faced with enormous exclusion by the majority population, built hundreds of social institutions to provide basic services for their communities. This process is thought to have infused a strength and cohesiveness in the Black community that was perhaps used to harness resources required to begin the civil rights movement of the mid-twentieth century. However, scholars question the Black community's ability in the post-civil rights era to build such institutions and assume that much of their racial vigor and cohesiveness was lost. This article examines the validity of these assumptions in the context of an elderly home maintained solely by African-Americans for 78 years in Chicago.

## Background

As the twentieth century approached, African American community leaders built a "Black Metropolis" in Chicago, which included hundreds of social institutions that provided basic services to residents faced with widespread exclusion by the majority population. The establishment and sustenance of these organizations required the tireless commitment of the Black middle-class, especially those who came to Chicago in the first waves of migration and had developed a place among the city's African American elite. Many of their social clubs were actively engaged in charitable activities, the funds from which were funneled directly to community institutions such as the Phyllis Wheatley Home, the Louise Juvenile Home, the Amanda Smith Home for Girls and the little known Home for Aged and Infirm Colored People (HAICP, later renamed the Jane Dent Home). The histories of these organizations offer volumes of materials to those studying trends and



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changes in 20<sup>th</sup> century African-American social history.

An examination of African-American social institutions is part of a larger inquiry into how the Black community, and particularly its middle-class, functioned before and after the civil rights movement. Scholars have debated Wilson's (1987) contention that out migration of the Black middle class in the post civil rights era, along with changes in a postindustrial job market, contributed to the emergence of a full-blown African American underclass by the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. Without leaders who could maintain community institutions and serve as role models to young community residents, education rates declined and social disorder increased. Patillo McCoy (1999) acknowledged that out migration occurred in the post civil rights era but pointed out that this process began much earlier and that the Black middle class largely moved to areas near poor communities and/or neighborhoods that remained integrated by class. The history of the Jane Dent Home provides further evidence that middle class leadership remained involved in the maintenance of community institutions after leaving the neighborhood, even after the 1960's when out migration accelerated.

Nonetheless, the Jane Dent Home did experience radical change in the level of community support that it received beginning mid-century. While decreased board activity for the Jane Dent Home perhaps could be attributed to out migration, changes in the numbers and focus of Black voluntary associations at this time must also be considered. Some of the changes in voluntary associations may be explained by changes in the nature of women's activism. The Home's establishment in 1893 paralleled the beginnings of enormous social activism by women. The nature of such activism, women's commitment to "race work", and the prominence of national Black women's organizations are thought to have shifted in the late 1950s and 1960s, adversely affecting less politicized forms of social service work in the community (Giddings, 1984; Gray White, 1999).

This paper will discuss the impact of these changes on community efforts to maintain a home for the aged for nearly 80 years. It will illustrate the persistence of community leadership despite a dwindling of needed resources in terms of both funds and volunteers. Before relating the story of the Home's establishment, it's important to briefly describe the context of the community that created it.

### *Care for the elderly within the Black metropolis*

At the turn of the twentieth century, African-American leaders nationally were deeply concerned about conditions facing the Black elderly. Despite the fact that their numbers did not exceed 3.5% of the total Black population in 1910, their plight was considered to be a grave one (Pollard, 1996). W.E.B. DuBois wrote in an 1898 work, "...the breaking up of families in slavery by sale and during the War and Reconstruction times, greatly aggravated the sufferings of the old, while the loosened family ties, due to the slave system, left in post-bellum times numbers of neglected old folk" (DuBois, 1908). DuBois, Harriet Tubman and many others traveled to Black communities exhorting local groups and individuals to establish such homes.

The rapid growth of Chicago's Black community would enable its leadership to build and maintain numerous social service institutions like the Jane Dent Home. In 1900, Black Chicago was just 2% of the city's total population (or 30,000). However, by 1930 it reached just under 250,000 and surged to 816,000 in 1960 rendering it second only to New York City's over one million African-Americans (Community Area Health Inventory, 1992-1994; Jackson, 1995). Its large size enabled the African-American community to build institutions of local and national importance. Thus, Provident Hospital became one of the few training facilities for Black nurses in the country. The *Chicago Defender*, with a national circulation of 200,000 in 1925, two-thirds of which was outside of Chicago, was the most widely sold Black newspaper in the country. Two Black owned banks, Binga State Bank and Douglas Bank, "held deposits over one-third of all the banking resources that Blacks possessed nationally" in 1930 (Bates, 2001). Moreover, Chicagoans elected their first Black Alderman in 1915, twenty-six years before New York City and sent this same alderman, Oscar DePriest, to the United States Congress in 1928, making him the first Black from the north and the first Black elected since the fall of Reconstruction.

### *Women's clubs promote social institutions*

Women, who often played a supportive role to male leadership, were a powerful source of initiative and hard work in the establishment and sustenance of the institutions that defined Black Chicago. As historians Hine (1994, 1998), Gray White (1999), Higginbotham (1993), and Smith (1995) assert conditions at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century "spun a creative tension that moti-

vated and empowered Black women to speak out" (Higinbotham, 1993). That "speaking out" resulted in the establishment of a wide range of institutions that included kindergartens, youth clubs, reading rooms, summer camps, day nurseries, community centers and shelter and elderly homes, which ballooned membership nationally in the Black women's clubs from a mere 5,000 in 1899 to 300,000 by 1925 (Smith, 1995, p. 17; O'Donnell, 2001; Collins, 1991). Historians Hendricks (1998) and Knupfer (1996) who write on local conditions assert that Black club women as a group were stronger in Chicago than in many other cities due in part to the complexities that resulted from rapid population growth, segregation, and the presence of several powerful women reformers, both Black and White (Hendricks, 1998). According to Knupfer, by 1915 roughly 150 clubs had been organized by Black women in Chicago (Knupfer, 1996). The pioneer Black women's groups, referred to as the "Majic Seven," were behind much of the social service work and together established the Illinois Federation of Colored Women's Clubs in 1899. The "Majic Seven" included the Ida B. Wells Club, Phyllis Wheatley Club, the Civic League, the Progressive Circle of the King's Daughters, the Ideal Women's Club, the G.O.P. Elephant Club, and the Julia Gaston Club (Schultz and Hast, 2001). In specific instances, it was African-American clubwomen who were first to support novel and/or radical ideas in Chicago. Bates (2001) discusses this in the building of the Pullman Porters union in Chicago, which was shunned by nearly all Black male leaders and organizations. A. Phillip Randolph and the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters received their first public support in Chicago from Ida B. Wells-Barnett and the city's Black clubwomen (Bates, 2001, pp. 66-71). According to Reed (1997) and Strickland (1966), similar proactive support was crucial to the survival of the Chicago Urban League and NAACP branch. Many of the charter members of the Home were representative of this group and served as officers in many of the Black women's clubs.

### *Community institutions as a response to segregation*

Yet despite the community's accomplishments and mammoth size, Black Chicagoans were restricted by numerous forms of segregation. Up through the 1950s, Blacks were denied entrance to the city's private hospitals, its parks and public schools located outside the Black belt, along with lodging houses, orphanages, and small and large retail establishments (Grossman, 1989; Philpot, 1991). Most apparent in residential patterns,

segregation was a central cause of the 1919 race riot, forcing nearly 85% of all Blacks, regardless of socioeconomic class, to reside in one of two communities, the larger south side and a smaller community on Chicago's west side. Segregation was found in most social service agencies, including elderly homes which were no exception (Goodwin, 1989). A 1930 survey indicated that racial separation, though rarely written in admissions' requirements, was standard policy and explained why only 50 of the 3,808 beds available in private elderly homes were occupied by African-Americans who lived either in the HAICP or the African Methodist Deaconess Home, the latter a second elderly home established by Blacks in 1924 and closed circa 1963 (Glick, 1930).

The intensity of segregation in Chicago, which sociologists Massey and Denton (1993) labeled hyper-segregation, prompted a significant response from the city's Black community that was grounded in efforts to develop parallel and community autonomy institutions inside Bronzeville. Exhortations about the need for racial solidarity, self-reliance, reinforced by DuBois, Truth, and Tubman, all supported this approach and resulted in Black Chicago establishing nearly 800 organizations by 1937 (Drake and Cayton, 1962). According to Drake and Cayton (1962), a centerpiece of Black middle-class life in Chicago before World War II was involvement in a "complex web of voluntary associations," the vast majority of which were organized and maintained by women. Black Chicagoans were essentially "joiners", whose organizations became vehicles for advancing the race. The Home for the Aged and Infirm Colored People was one such institution established in this environment.

### *The establishment of the Home for the Aged and Infirm Colored People*

#### *The early years: 1898-1930*

In 1893, Gabriella Knighten Smith, a local seamstress, welcomed four African-American elderly persons into her home with the assistance of Fannie Mason, Joanna Snowden Porter and Maggie Stewart. Though little is known about Knighten-Smith other than her leadership of the HAICP for a number of years, both Mason and Snowden Porter were prominent women in Black Chicago. For instance, Snowden-Porter served as an officer in the Juvenile Protection Association, Children's Aid Society, Giles Charity Club,

West Side Women's Club, and eventually joined the Chicago Urban League Board (Schultz and Hast, 2001).

Like other homes for the Black elderly, the founding members established the home for America's formerly enslaved. Thus, the HAICP's Annual Report stated that the first fourteen residents were former slaves, "who from various causes are dependent upon the charity of others, although they have endeavored since freedom to maintain themselves" (HAICP Annual Report, 1899). Home records indicate that resident Sophia Job, purported by census records to be born in 1777, was previously enslaved on the plantation of one of Virginia's colonial governors, as was resident Hazel Stewart who was listed as 128 years old in 1901 (Lewis, 1901). These early residents, their families, or former employers were required to pay an initial admission fee of \$100, which was raised to \$200 in 1917 (Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor). All residents were ostensibly abandoned; applicants were not accepted if they had children who could care for them (Welfare Council of Metropolitan Chicago, 1943).

From its incorporation in 1898, the Home was largely administered by its Board of Directors, which included many of Chicago's prominent African-Americans. Its first president was African-American State Representative Major John C. Buckner (1894-98). Buckner was joined by other prominent men and their wives, among them Julius Avendorph, assistant to the president of the Pullman Company, and Dr. George Cleveland Hall, then the director of Provident Hospital (Colored American, 1901). In these early decades, three of the first six African-Americans elected to the Illinois legislature would serve on the Home's Board. In 1916, physician Daniel Hale Williams joined the Board and Jesse Binga, founder of Binga State Bank, served as its president in 1917 (HAICP Board Minutes, 1917). Mortician David McGowan began 46 years of service as the Board's President in 1919. For over twenty of these years, he was assisted by local dentists Lawrence Blanchette and Charles Lewis, who held officer positions during their years of service. Combined with the prominence of its members was the Board's size, which included no less than thirty directors by 1922 (Knupfer, 1996; HAICP Board Minutes, 1925).

In these early decades, the Board could also depend on support from other prominent Blacks in Chicago. Alderman (and later Congressman) Oscar DePriest pays the labor for a new bathroom in 1922. The Amateur Minstrel Club, an organization of middle-class men solely devoted to raising funds for the HAICP, organized an annual benefit show for thirty consecu-

tive years, their contributions totaling \$20,000 (HAICP Annual Report, 1934). Among Chicago's Black middle-class, the HAICP was considered one of the jewels of early Black Chicago. Its happenings were routinely reported in the Black press, particularly its glitzy annual fundraisers. Nonetheless, its public support and image were in some measure different than its structure: the Home's paid staff was skeletal, consisting of a matron, cook, and handyman, and operating on a relatively low salary compared to other Homes for the Aged in Chicago (Welfare Council of Metropolitan Chicago, 1951).

In 1898, the same year that it incorporated, the HAICP moved to a larger residence. In order to avoid trouble from white neighbors, the elders reportedly moved into their new home in the middle of the night (Davis, 1922; Lewis, 1901). The home, donated by a local German woman, was situated in an Irish neighborhood adjacent to Chicago's growing African-American community. Months after Chicago's 1919 race riot, the HAICP moved again to a new location inside the Grand Boulevard community. According to Drake and Cayton (1962), the section in Bronzeville, in its most southern portions, to which the Home moved had a particularly high volume of organizational activity. "In the 'best areas' of Bronzeville, we find over seven times as much social-club activity as in the 'worst' areas, and the amount of social-club activity rises as we move from the lower-class northern end of the Black Belt toward the more well-to-do southern tip." (p. 702). A larger residence, this new home was surrounded by the families who provided all types of support to the HAICP, including in most months, "two pounds of sugar, and three dozen eggs". Support was such that the new residence's mortgage was paid off in just three years, which the 1923 Board report attributed to the "cooperation and race consciousness" of members of the community (HAICP Annual Report, 1923).

The records of the Illinois Federation of Colored Women's Clubs indicate strong support from the women's clubs. Black clubwomen organized the Ladies Labor of Love Club, raised hundreds of dollars from among other events an Annual Charity Ball, paid for a bathroom to be installed, and donated other needed materials. The Woman's Aid society paid in its early years the cook's salary, and donated quilts, bed linens and food and provided a monthly contribution to the home for years. (Landis, 1970; HAICP Annual Report, 1927). Clubwoman Emma Chandler organized the Volunteer Workers for the Home in 1904 and the Union Charity Club in 1910; both groups were solely dedicated to raising funds for the HAICP (Davis, 1922;

Knupfer, 1996). Dozens of smaller groups including churches made regular contributions to the Home and created what Knupfer described as a "webbed network of fundraisers" that ensured the Home's survival (HAICP Annual Report, 1936; Welfare Council of Metropolitan Chicago Report, 1960; Knupfer, 1996). Their support enabled the Home to end its first three decades in relatively decent shape. According to 1927 reports, the Home was filled to capacity in the late twenties, and was only unable to offer shelter to additional residents because of city occupancy restrictions.

### *Surviving the Depression: 1930-1960*

However, home finances were quickly drained as the Depression loomed. With an admissions fee at \$300 by 1935, its new residents, then from more middle and working class backgrounds, included among them Pullman porters and an occasional physician. However, resident numbers would fall with the economy from as high as 25 to less than 15, as potential applicants were unable to pay the admission fees.

Board minutes in 1932 stated that the "times have made conditions almost unbelievably severe" and in 1934, the Board expressed "misgivings due to the general economic distress." (HAICP Annual Report, 1931, 1934). During these times, additional help was provided by the community. A 1935 Welfare Council of Chicago report indicated that, "members of the Board spend considerable time at the Home doing special work which is needed. They often volunteer to do extra cleaning, such as polishing and woodwork and making curtains." Their work occurred both in and out of home and was much like that of Gonzales Motts who organized a tea for the home at the Parkway Ballroom in 1941 and both the Hi-Noon Club and Circle de Fleur who made significant contributions (Welfare Council of Metropolitan Chicago, 1935). Financial support was also provided by former Board members; former house committee chair Jane Dent willed the HAICP 200 shares of Union Carbide stock at the time of her death in 1935 while founder and State Legislator Edward Green deeded a multi-family unit to the HAICP years later (HAICP Annual Report, 1942; Welfare Council of Metropolitan Chicago, 1935).

African-American clubwomen remained involved in the Home throughout this period. The Women's Aid Society, Circle de Fleur Club, and the Ladies Labor of Love were the most active. However, the other women's groups, the Gaudeamus Club, Dorcas Art club, and Volunteer Workers continued to give monies and mate-

rials. The Home's Association, which in 1954 was predominately female, provided further assistance (HAICP Annual Report, 1954). Knupfer points out that the tradition of service to one's community was so strong among African American clubwomen that it was passed down through successive generations, socializing "young girls into a political action and social consciousness." (Knupfer, 1996). A *Chicago Tribune* writer reported that membership in a particular society "... was an inherited legacy for Mrs. (Alone) Feaman, whose mother and grandmother before her were active members." (Landis, 1970). In dedicating nearly fifty years of labor to the Home, Feaman was following a tradition established by her grandmother, Ella Smith, and mother, Laura Jennings, according to Barbara Bowman, niece of Alone Feamon, (Bowman interview, 2002).

Yet it is during this middle period that support for the Home begins to fluctuate. Although in 1941 and 1946, McGowan thanks several youth groups for their interest in helping out in the Home, in other years he laments the Home's inability to recruit individuals to the Board. By 1955, McGowan writes that the Board was "somewhat disturbed over our inability to secure active board members...it is extremely important that a continuing group accept this work." (HAICP Annual Report, 1955). The fluctuations evident in his reports mirrored financial conditions as well as resident numbers in the Home's middle years.

### *Dwindling resources: 1960-1975*

Severe financial problems resurfaced in the 1960s. That year's Welfare Council Report revealed dwindling revenue sources, which worsened as the decade progressed. In the 1960s, the Jane Dent Home was prodded by the Welfare Council of Metropolitan Chicago to pursue federal funding through the Hill Burton Act. However, such expansion never occurred. The license of the Home was temporarily suspended in 1960 for failure to comply with the State's new regulations for shelter care homes. Throughout that year the Board received pressure from the Illinois Department of Public Health to upgrade their building, install sprinklers, post menus, and add more citrus to the residents' diet (Welfare Council of Metropolitan Chicago Report, 1960). The Secretary of State temporarily closed the Home again in November of 1966.

Exclusive Black women's organizations, though fewer than before, continued to support the HAICP, which was re-named the Jane Dent Home in 1961. The

organization, The Girlfriends, frequented the Home, providing musical entertainment to its residents. A second organization of Black upper middle class women, the Links, Inc., consistently donated roughly \$1,000 per year between 1961 and 1972, with HAICP Board members serving as officers in the local Links chapter (Links Financial Reports, 1961-1969).

The profile of Board members continued to be mainly that of socially prominent members of Chicago's Black upper middle-class. HAICP member and later Board president Stanley Tate, son of physician William Tate, recruited heavily from two important hubs of Black upper middle-class life: the Original Forty Club, an exclusive organization of Black professional and political men established in 1915 and The Church of the Good Shepherd, a Congregational church that was for decades dominated by Chicago's Black upper middle-class (Evans and Bowman interviews, 2002). In 1967, Cook County's first African-American State's Attorney joined the Board, along with a physician, the manager of the Parkway Ballroom (one of Black Chicago's most sophisticated entertainment venues), a judge and Pittsburgh Courier writer. Echoing the role that Black churches have played in providing support to the elderly, The Church of the Good Shepherd attached itself to the Home until it closed in 1975 (Jackson, Chatters, & Taylor 1993; Evans and Bowman interviews, 2002). Church members supplied food and donated monies and items of necessity. The Church established a regular program that sent its children into the Home to sing, perform, and befriend Home residents (Smith and Evans interview, 2002). To provide shelter care for the Black elderly, the Church opened the Good Shepherd Manor in 1979 and Good Shepherd Towers in 1985. These elderly apartments housed working-class neighborhood residents rather than members of the congregation, the same population that resided at the HAICP (Smith and H. Evans interviews, 2002).

However, the size of the Board in its last fifteen years was small; it rarely exceeded fifteen and attendance at meetings ranged from five to ten members. Concern about their inability to recruit help continued. In 1970, Board member Alone Feaman would inform a Chicago Tribune reporter of the difficulty the Home was having in finding Black doctors to volunteer, as so many did in the past at the HAICP (Landis, 1970).

The HAICP's Board leased the property to a tenant in 1975, thus effectively closing its shelter care facility. The Jane Dent Home Association purchased land further south for construction of a larger facility. How-

ever, the Jane Dent corporation was suspended again in 1989 and for the last time in September of 1991.

## *Discussion*

### *A shift in women's activism*

The Home's establishment in 1893 paralleled the beginnings of enormous social activism by women. However, historians document a change in women's organizations beginning in the 1950s. Both Giddings (1984) and White (1999) observe among the post-1950 membership a growing proclivity to view these groups as vehicles for professional rather than racial advancement. Furthermore, White (1999) notes that the National Council of Negro Women (NCNW) lost many of its members, including many capable leaders, to local NAACP chapters and church groups that were involved in civil rights activities. According to White, the grass roots focus of the Civil Rights movement undermined the leadership by the race's middle class women and in the end, "hastened the trend and created new hurdles for Black women's organizations." (Gray White, 2001).

The question of what impact these changes had on women's involvement in Chicago remains central to this discussion. Women remained a prominent part of the social fabric of Black Chicago's institutional life and social activism. That they moved into public sphere activities is a given. Gains included Irene McCoy Gaines' 1940 unsuccessful bid to become the first Black woman to be elected as an Illinois State Representative, Republican Jewel LaFontant's 1955 appointment as the U.S. Attorney for the District of Illinois and Floy Clements' 1958 successful election to the Illinois General Assembly. In 1962, Chicago elects its first African-American female judge and in 1971 sends its first African-American woman to its City Council. Additionally, Reed discusses their heightened role in Chicago's NAACP where by 1950 women occupied 15 of the 37 hotly contested Board seats (1997, p. 142). The Chicago NAACP would elect its first woman president, Cora Patton, in 1954. Patton had previously served as president of the women's group the Gaudeamus Club from 1931 through 1937 (Reed, 1997; Wesley, 1984). Black women's role in civil rights activism resurfaced in the longstanding fight to integrate Chicago Public Schools. According to historian James R. Ralph (1993), Black women from two middle-class communities, Chatham/Avalon and Vernon Park, were in the forefront of these struggles, organizing major sit-ins in re-

sponse to the school system's intractability. Ralph writes that these grassroots groups, many led by women, "were ahead of the established civil rights organizations like the NAACP in their assertiveness." (Ralph, 1993, p. 16) Other African-American middle-class women continued to build gender-specific civil rights organizations, notably social worker and university professor Armita Young Boswell, sister to former Urban League Director Whitney Young Jr. Boswell founded the National Hook-Up of Black Women and the League of Black Women in the post-Civil Rights era and directed the women's division of Martin Luther King Jr.'s 1966 March in Chicago (Boswell, 2002).

A subset of the women's organizations that were active in the early decades of the twentieth century remained active through the 1980s. In 1981, National Association for Colored Women's Clubs records listed ten clubs that formerly raised monies for the HAICP as still in existence (Wesley, 1984). Among them the American Rose Art Civic and Charity club, the Dorcas Art and Charity Club, the East Side Women's Club, the Gaudeamus Women's Club, the Volunteer Workers, and the West Side Women's Charity Club. NACW reports indicate that another twenty women's groups that provided social service assistance and were established before 1954 were also extant in 1981.

### *The question of Black community leaders' involvement*

However, once professional and residential opportunities became available to the Black middle-class, Chicago's Black population became increasingly bifurcated by class. Bifurcation, the result of the out-migration of the middle-class, is judged to have radically changed the nature of intra-class relations, in effect reducing Black middle-class involvement in poor and working-class Black communities, thus ridding these areas of key social service institutions (Wilson 1987, 1996). Regarding this change at the local NAACP, Christopher Reed writes "this breakthrough in occupational mobility adversely affected the pattern of volunteerism, which had made the branch's Legal Redress Committee always a well-staffed legal bureau in the NAACP's crusade against discrimination." (Reed, 1997, p. 158). While this change in the class composition of the Black Metropolis may have contributed to the difficulty experienced by the Jane Dent Home's Board in recruiting new members, the involvement of key members of the black upper middle-class well into the 1970s certainly supports Pattillo-McCoy's (1999)

assertion that the Black middle class never fully abandoned the poor.

Furthermore, Pattillo-McCoy's finding that the Black middle class moved before the 1960's to more affluent neighborhoods that were in close proximity to poorer black communities is also supported by the history of the Jane Dent Home. Although Board members McGowan, Lewis, and Blanchette were living in a more exclusive community just three or four miles south of Bronzeville (the Woodlawn community) in as early as 1920, each remained involved in the Home for decades. By 1965, 1970, and 1975, the vast majority of the HAICP's Board also listed home addresses in further south neighborhoods of Chatham and Avalon (HAICP Annual Report, 1975, 1980, 1990).

What is interesting concerning this discussion is whether residence is the primary factor in forging or maintaining community ties. Many of the HAICP's board members continued to maintain professional offices or businesses in Bronzeville, which kept them closely tied to these communities. For instance, David McGowan's funeral home, Kersey, McGowan, and Morsell, which was located just seven blocks from the HAICP, continued to be the site of most Board meetings through his retirement in 1963. Charles Lewis maintained his dental office just blocks from the HAICP for decades; both continued their involvement in the Home. Businessmen and professionals may have been particularly motivated to remain involved in the community given their interest in preserving a stable business climate and maintaining good customer relations.

However, as Board President David McGowan's lamentations indicate, changes became apparent in the HAICP's support structure. What was missing in these latter decades was the large 'webbed network of groups' that provided regular donations of food, furniture, and funding. Fundraising in the latter decades appeared to be more sporadic and individually based. Despite the existence of some of the early organizations (the Gaudeamus Club and Volunteer Workers for example), Board members approached wealthy family and friends for assistance in times of crisis in these later decades (Bowman interview, 2002). The absence of regular sources of charitable funding represents a marked change from the past when in 1898 the Home counted in its Annual Report donations (large and small) from 56 different sources, largely organizations. Even in the midst of the Depression, contributions were listed from 13 organizations. Other thoroughfares for assistance in the Home's infrastructure were also large: its dues paying Association numbered 300 in 1920, by 1954 it was



down to 105 members, and no mention of an Association was made in the 1960s. In earlier decades, both Black and white residents of Chicago willed property to the Home, thus adding to the HAICP's budget. The Home also benefited from organizations in the pre-World War II period that were formed *solely* to fundraise for it. This dearth of contributing groups was particularly problematic given the enormous amounts of money that were required to comply with new state regulations.

### Conclusion

The history of the Jane Dent Home reveals both shifts and continuity in the role of Black middle-class and of African-American middle-class women in sustaining community institutions during the post World War II period. What appears to be consistent was the steady stream of interest that a small group of Black upper middle class individuals maintained in the Home. Members from this group maintained a longstanding interest in keeping the Home open and in re-establishing a larger and more equipped home in the 1980s. Women were central in the latter group, again rotating top administrative positions with Black men from the community's leadership circles, and organizing groups to ensure the Home's viability. However, the large and intricate network of largely women's groups that had

been established withered in the last half of the twentieth century. Additionally, Black middle-class organizations, though they continued to forge connections with Home residents, ceased to hold large annual fund raisers like those organized by the Amateur Minstrel's Club, which were important line items in the Home's budget. Lastly, Chicago's Black community of the 1970s, larger and more complicated, could no longer ensure that highly visible and prominent African-American leaders, those of the stature (and perhaps pull) of Congressman De Priest and bank founder Jesse Binga would galvanize support for the Home. For these reasons, the Home quickly became a relic of an earlier and simpler Black Chicago.

Close examination of Black social institutions throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century provides further evidence of the strength of community leadership in the Black community at the beginning of the millennium when overt segregation made the survival of parallel institutions essential. This history suggests a commitment to the institution that continued decades after out migration of the middle class began to occur refuting the notion that Chicago's Black middle-class was both geographically and psychologically isolated from the Black poor. Renewed study of such institutions may shed further light on the nature of community leadership throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century including the important role played by women and the affects of changes in the rates of volunteerism on the survival of African-American social institutions past the middle of the century.

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