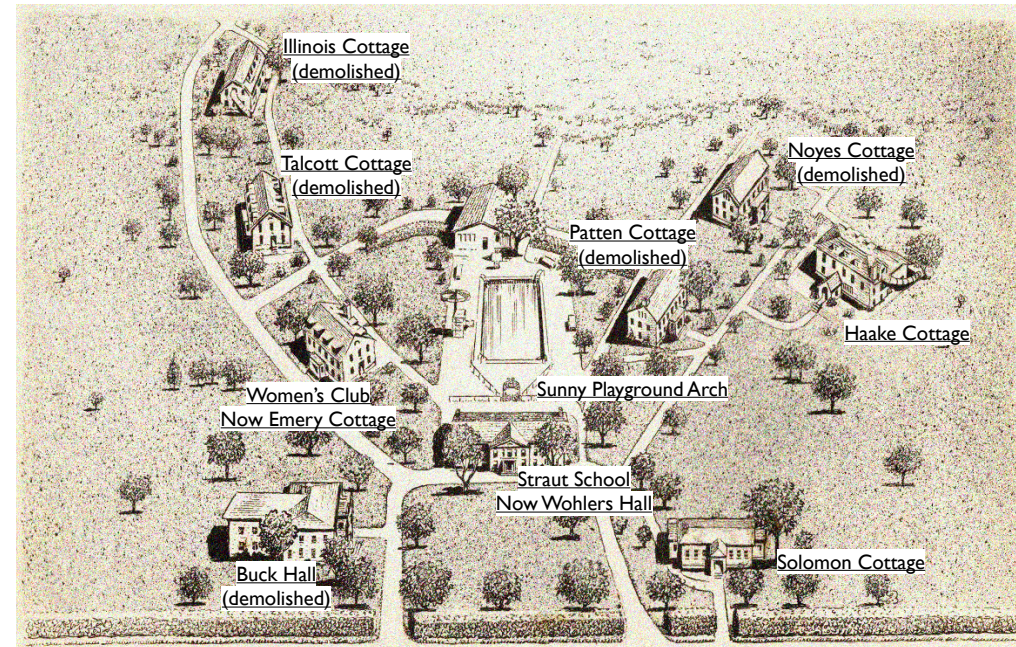


PARK RIDGE HISTORY CENTER

Walking Tour of Prospect Park



**Sketch of Buildings and Grounds
Park Ridge School for Girls, circa 1925**

Before This Place Became Our New Prospect Park...

...the buildings and grounds here were known as The Youth Campus, a social service agency that closed in 2012. The campus was first called the Illinois Industrial School for Girls in 1908 and later the Park Ridge School for Girls in 1913.

In 1876, after the Civil War, Delia Wardner visited Cairo, Illinois, with her husband Brigade Surgeon Horace Wardner. She was moved by the plight of so many young girls left dependent or destitute by that War. She worked to charter a system of Illinois Industrial Schools to help young children in need, by providing them with parental guidance, education and skills to help them find a place in life. The School for Girls opened in 1877 in the Evanston Old Soldiers Home, a small place with cramped living quarters and school rooms.

School directors had foreseen the need for a new suburban location early on, one more conducive to the School's mission, and thanks to Mary Talcott, wife of Park Ridge pioneer Mancel Talcott, Jr., her 1883 bequest of \$5,000 enabled the purchase of forty acres of farmland at Oakton Street and Prospect Avenue for this purpose.



School Kids Working in the Fields



Sunny Playground Arch



In front of the Barn

Six residential cottages were planned around a central and open park-like campus, with a housemother in charge of each. In 1908, the School relocated here. The tour starts at the very first Cottage constructed that year, to accommodate seven students and housemother. It was named in honor of the School President, Hannah Solomon. Funds for construction of this Cottage were donated by her friend Julius Rosenwald, legendary philanthropist and President of Sears, Roebuck & Company. By 1914, five additional residential cottages were built and another two buildings for classrooms and an assembly hall.

Today, we see both the presence of the historic School for Girls and a very modern public park in the panorama of our Prospect Park. These grounds and the legacy buildings were listed on the National register of Historic Places in 1998 for the architecture of the buildings and for the social significance of the School's mission. This listing remains so to this time despite the changes in the original school grounds.

Three of the original eight School buildings remain here as part of the legacy of historic Park Ridge. Our tour takes us to these three buildings, all of which were designed in the architectural studios of Holabird and Roche (now known as Holabird and Root) in Chicago.



Julius Rosenwald

Chicago businessman Julius Rosenwald, part-owner of Sears, Roebuck and Company, is credited with providing the funds needed to build the Solomon cottage after the Illinois Industrial School for Girls moved from Evanston to Park Ridge.

Rosenwald summarized his philosophy of philanthropy quite simply: "What I want to do is try and cure the things that seem wrong."

Rosenwald's career as a public benefactor extended over three decades and was carried on after his death by the Rosenwald Fund.



Hannah Solomon

Hannah Solomon was not only the celebrated founder of the National Council of Jewish Women, but also an important force for reform in turn-of-the-century Chicago. Solomon was indefatigable in her active civic involvement. Her many positions included serving as President of the Illinois Industrial School for Girls, a role that affected her "more deeply than that [of any other]."

Mrs. Solomon continued her support for the School for Girls as a Board Member many years after her 1908 term as President.



**Noyes Cottage
(Now Demolished)**



**View of Buck Hall
(Now Demolished)
with Talcott (Now
Demolished) and
Emery Cottages**



**Patten Cottage
(Now Demolished)**

In 1914, looking across the open and circular school campus, one would have seen the four other residential Cottages built for the young girls: Talcott, Illinois, Noyes and Patten.



Emery Cottage

The Emery Cottage was originally named for the Chicago Women's Club and was built in 1910 with funds provided by the Club. It was the fourth building on the School grounds and served as a residence for young students at the School. The Chicago Women's Club, through its Reform Department was instrumental in setting in motion the move of the School from Evanston to a new beginning in the leafy Village of Park Ridge. Both Jane Addams and Hannah Solomon were Members of the Club, and the Reform Department, and we believe Ms. Addams was instrumental in bringing Hannah Solomon on board to remedy the financial and administrative difficulties of the School in Evanston. It took more than two years for Mrs. Solomon to complete this difficult job, and she remained on the School Board for years thereafter.

The cottage is brick, one-and-one-half story with side-gabled roofing, a raised basement and attic.

In 1980, the Cottage was renamed for Marjorie Wilder Emery of Elmhurst, in honor of her long service on the School Board and her generosity to the School's mission. Marjorie Wilder Emery was the wife of William H. Emery, Jr., who, in 1903, became president of Chicago Rawhide, founded by his father in the 1880s. This Cottage has no assigned current use.

In 1913, the name of the school was changed from the Illinois Industrial School for Girls to the Park Ridge School for girls. The school focused on preparing girls for transition into a homemaker role – “having thus the foundation laid to specialize if she is to earn her living in one of the trades which underlay the home”.

Teachers of domestic science and academic work were employed at the school, who instructed the girls during the mornings in cooking and sewing. In the afternoon, they listened to lectures on anatomy and physiology, home nursing, first aid and music. Meals were prepared in the Straut Building's (now Wholers Hall) practice kitchen and students were instructed in serving and waiting. The girls also worked on the farm and vegetable garden that provided much of the fresh food for the school including milk and fresh eggs.

By the 1930s the curriculum gradually replaced domestic science with bookkeeping and secretarial courses. Throughout the history of the school, up until it closed in 2012, the school continued to adapt to the changing needs of the youth in its care.





Solomon Cottage

A lengthy renovation of the interior of this Cottage was completed in 2017. It preserved the room used as the refectory and parlor, and the room used as the dormitory to their same overall appearance as in 1908. These rooms are located to the left and right, respectively, as you enter the Cottage at the Prospect Avenue door. These are now display rooms for the Society's artifacts, and many photographs from the early days of the School are present in them today, including copies of the blueprints, which locate the kitchen, housemother's room, quarantine room, vegetable cellar, coal bin, etc. Please enjoy these displays during your visit to the History Center.

Note the water table on this cottage...an 8-inch angled slab of concrete emphasizing the first floor of fireproof construction. Windows are double-hung sash, 6 over 1, with a flat arch and splayed brick soldier course. The corners of the building have brick quoins and dentils at the gable ends. Although modest in detail inside, the solid construction of this building marks a place intended to stand for many, many years. The smallest of all legacy buildings here, the Cottage served as the intake facility for the School, a place where the young girls could become acclimated to life at the School.



Wohler's Hall

The Straut School of Domestic Economy building was the original name of this 1910 building at the center of Prospect park. This imposing structure was the third built here with funds donated through a bequest of the estate of Elizabeth A. and George Straut. This is the crown jewel of Georgian Revival / Institutional architecture on the Campus. We recognize the design of windows, arches and quoins from those at the Solomon Cottage. Here also is a special center entry, with a portico with limestone columns, with Ionic capitals, approximately 11' high, and with a stone entablature 2'-9" above the capitals.

This was the administration building for the School, with classrooms, offices, and rooms for the Superintendent and teachers. It featured a well-equipped classroom kitchen for the cooking school, with an attractive dining room where the young girls learned to wait at table. Also, a laundry room and dairy, with shower bath for the girls who worked in the laundry and on the farm. You'll find several photographs of young girls working on the School's farmland in the Center.

Many people recall that Park Ridgeans Albert and Jane Wohlers provided generously for a complete renovation of the Straut School Building in 1998, and it is now known as Wohlers Hall, serving as the headquarters building for the Park District.