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Guide to the Park House Records 1928-1996



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Descriptive Summary

Identifier	ICU.SPCL.PARKHOUSE
Title	Park House. Records
Date	1928-1996
Size	13.5 linear feet (21 boxes)
Repository	Special Collections Research Center University of Chicago Library 1100 East 57th Street Chicago, Illinois 60637 U.S.A.

Abstract Park House was described as a "combination Bohemian rooming house, YMCA, and youth settlement house," located on Chicago's Near North Side. Founded in 1934, the house was named after University of Chicago Sociologist Robert E. Park and run by Ruth and James B. Nobel. Park House was designed to provide community and entertainment for the many young people who had recently arrived in Chicago, leaving families and communities behind. Until its closure in 1944, activities at Park House included dancing, music, lectures, discussion groups, writing groups, research projects, performances, and shared meals. The Park House Records describe the activities of the house through correspondence, financial records, diaries, reports, surveys, newsletters, and writings by residents. The Records also included materials related to House sociology and sociological experiments, records about churches and religion on Chicago's Near North Side, papers relating to Robert E. Park's involvement with the House, and materials relating to the Park House Reunion in 1982.

Information on Use

Access

No restrictions.

Citation

When quoting material from this collection, the preferred citation is: Park House. Records, [Box #, Folder #], Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library

Historical Note

An accurate description of Park House is difficult to construct. One participant described the house as a "combination Bohemian rooming house, YMCA, and youth settlement house," located on Chicago's Near North Side. However, while residents and participants conducted

lengthy discussions about the nature of Park House, they often found it easier to define what the House was not.

Founded in 1934, the house was named after University of Chicago Sociologist Robert E. Park and run by Ruth and James B. Nobel. James Nobel conceived the idea for Park House while he was a graduate student at the University of Chicago. Park House was designed to provide community and entertainment for the many young people who had recently arrived in Chicago, leaving families and communities behind. It was distinctive in part because it sought to serve a population that was neither particularly wealthy nor particularly poor. Activities at Park House included dancing, music, lectures, discussion groups, writing groups, performances, and shared meals. Its founders also considered the House an experiment in sociology and social psychology. Residents of the House conducted several surveys of the surrounding neighborhood, including studies of local churches and ethnic groups. Participants were also encouraged to partake in Nobel's "experiments in conversation," that sought to encourage both self-reflection and an expansive understanding of the world. At weekly events invited speakers and residents were invited to share their life stories with an audience that analyzed them. Speakers including Clifford Shaw, W. Lloyd Warner, and Robert E. Park reflected the sociological and academic orientation of Park House.

Park House residents prided themselves on their independence and diversity. While outsiders often linked the house with other institutional bodies like the University of Chicago and the New England Congregational Church, Park Housers were careful to note that these ties were never formalized. Most Park House residents and participants were white, and many were Midwesterners who struggled financially during the Depression. Despite these similarities, Park House participants came from varied religious, ethnic, religious, educational and class backgrounds. Outsiders often viewed Park House as a Communist or radical institutions; however, members described themselves as a group with a wide range of political views.

Park House struggled financially throughout its existence, receiving only limited funding from outside foundations. Park House closed in 1944, when the building was sold and turned into apartments. Many residents and participants remained close and a Park House reunion in 1982 attracted a significant percentage of people associated with the House. Many Park House alumni wrote to provide detailed accounts of their lives in the decades between the dissolution of Park House and the reunion.

Scope Note

The Park House Records consist of four Series. Series I contains the organizational materials of Park House including reports, minutes, and published and unpublished writings about Park House. Also included are James B. Nobel's extensive notebook diaries, which record day to day life at Park House between 1935 and 1932. Series II is made up of correspondence, primarily between Jim and Ruth Nobel and Park House resident and participants between the 1930s and 1940s. Series III consists of the financial records of Park House. Series IV includes subject files related to Park House including files about religion, Robert E. Park, the Illinois State Hospital at Elgin, the Park House reunion in 1982, and the University of Chicago.

Related Resources

The following related resources are located in the Department of Special Collections:

<http://www.lib.uchicago.edu/e/spcl/select.html>

Subject Headings

- Nobel, James B.
- Nobel, Ruth
- Park, Robert Ezra, 1864-1944
- Raushenbush, Winifred
- Park House (Chicago, Ill.)
- University of Chicago. Dept. of Sociology
- Chicago school of sociology
- Folk dancing
- Social psychology
- Sociology

INVENTORY

Series I: Organizational Materials and Writings

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Announcements, 1941

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Folder 9

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Friday Evening Guests, 1938-1939

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Jim and Ruth Nobel, Documents and Notes, n.d.

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"My First Adventure to Sea Aboard the Good Ship," 1939

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J.D. Nobel, City Experience, 1938

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J.D. Nobel, Notebook, 1935

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- Bick, Ann
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- Briede, Ruth
- Brownell, Adelaide Howard
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- Campbell, Douglass Gordon
- Carlson, Anton
- Caughran, William E.
- Chapman, Dorothy E.
- Chapman, Wayne
- Christian, Annie
- Chorpenning, Charlotte
- Christian, George
- Clark, Herma
- Clark, Le Mon
- Cody, Allicia and Joe
- Coffman, H.C.
- Cohen, Portia
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- Compton
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- Jones, Stanley
- Mellers, Marmaduke

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- Gerstenberg, Alice
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- Githens, Beverly
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- Haacke, Lucille
- Haeger Potteries
- Haile, William
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- Hamilton, Marjorie
- Hank, William
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- Hartley, Herbert
- Harrington, H.F.
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- Haydon, Eustace
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- Highland, Fred
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- Himel, William
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- Holder, Mary Lou
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- Larsen, Kund A.
- Lasswell, Harold
- La Violette, Wesley
- Lewis, C.
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- Loeffler, Betty
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- MacNeil, Malcolm
- Mann, William A.
- Manning, Mary
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- Manchow, Martha
- McClean, Helen
- McIntyre, O.O.
- McCain, Evelyn
- McCormick, Charles
- Mathey, Dale
- McCoron, Mary
- McGiffin, James
- McGovern, William Montgomery
- McGrath, Katherine
- Mortimer, Robert
- Mortenson, Robert
- McLanahan, Anne and Jack
- Merriam, Thornton W.
- Michael, Carol
- Miles, Mary Dearhurst
- Miles, John
- Milligan, Bruce and Kay
- Mielle, Elaine

- Mills, R. P.
- Miles, M.D.
- Miller, J.
- Ming, Yui (Mung Yee Yap)
- Mathey, Dale and Pete
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- Nelson, Alice
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- Nichols, Dale
- Nicolson, J.U.
- Norse, Julia
- Odell, Wanda
- Overstreet, Harry A.
- Perce, Helen Page
- Parks, S.

- Paulson, Robert
- Petri, Inger
- Preda, Anna Del
- Patton, Jessica
- Pearce, Catherine
- Pepin Family
- Pepin, Catherine
- Perkins, Midge
- Perkins, Larry
- Pollack, Polly Lu
- Pynchon, Harold Cooper
- Rades, June
- Redfield, Robert
- Reed, Charles F.
- Reidell, Wesley
- Richardson, Judith
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- Sandberg, Carl
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- Smith, T.V.
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- Springer, Willi
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- Stambaugh, John Howland
- Steinhaus, Edith
- Steinhaus, Arthur
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- Valquadts, Liesel
- Wagner, Fernando
- Ware, Robert
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- Water, Superintendent of, City of Chicago
- Weaver, Katherine D.
- Westerberg, Wesley M.
- Wiggam, Lionel
- Whitman, Margaret
- Wharton, Charles J.
- Whitford, W.G.
- Williams, Fred
- Wilder, Thornton
- Williams, Cedric
- Williams, Doris
- Winchester, Dickie Lillian
- Windett, Lucille
- Winsor, Ethel Reid
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- Wolfe, Marie
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- Wright, Anne
- Wyatt, Edith
- Wynns, Hogan and Maude
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- Bomar, Walter Frank
- Bousman, Lawrence
- Bowman, Marybelle
- Bradford, Janey

- Cooper, Marie
- Czaja, Michael and Helen
- Davies, Dorothy
- Donaldson, Howard M.
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- Ellis, Lucye W.
- Ellyson, Craig
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- Palm, Ester and William (Bill)
- Palmer, Max and La Verne
- Plenk, Agi and Henry

Box 17

Folder 1

Correspondence R

- Rich, Muriel and Jason
- Russell, Leah
- Russell, Robert Grant

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Folder 2

Correspondence, Strojny, H.A.

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Folder 3

Correspondence T

- Tedesko, Sally Murray
- Thomas, John R.
- Travis, Lawrence W.

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Folder 4

Correspondence, V-Z

- Wolff, Sophie
- Wynns, Elizabeth (Bess)
- Vercuski, Vincent
- Vickrey, Mimi Thompson
- Zur, John F.
- Zywert, Julie

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Folder 5

Correspondence, Incomplete Names

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Folder 6

Photographs, n.d.

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Folder 7

Planning

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Planning

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Planning

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Folder 10

Reflections on the Park House Reunion, 1982

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Folder 11

Park House Reunion Report and Yearbook, 1982

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Folder 12

Reunion Yearbook, 1982

Subseries 5: State Hospital at Elgin

Box 17

Folder 13

Annual Reports

- To the Directors for the Clinical Training of Theological Students, 1933
- St. Charles School for Boys, 1932

Box 17

Folder 14

Boisen, Anton T., Offprints and Articles, 1928-1933

Box 17

Folder 15

Boisen, Anton T., Offprints and Articles, 1937-1941, n.d.

Box 18

Folder 1

Correspondence

- Boisen, Anton T.
- Chapman, Alice
- Johnson, H.

Box 18

Folder 2

Case Notes, n.d.

Box 18

Folder 3

Case Notes and Analysis, 1926, n.d.

Box 18

Folder 4

Case Studies, 1933

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Folder 5

The Hospital Interpreter, 1933

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Folder 6

The Hospital Messenger, 1933

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Folder 7

Program, Forth of July Festivities, 1933

- Subseries 6: University of Chicago

Box 18

Folder 8

The Alumni Bulletin: The University of Chicago, 1935-1940

Box 18

Folder 9

Clippings, 1935-1940

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Folder 10

Pamphlets and Publications, 1935-1941

Box 18

Folder 11

Pamphlets and Publications, 1935-1941

Series V: Oversized

Box 19

Folder 1

Park House Scrapbook, 1930s

Box 19

Folder 2

Scrapbook Enclosures, 1940s, 1996

Box 20

Park House Photograph Album, circa 1930s

Box 21

Folder 1

Sketches, n.d.

Box 21

Folder 2

Song Book, Chicago Songs Written at Park House, n.d.

Box 21

Folder 3

Chicago Clippings, 1941

Box 21

Folder 4

Chicago Clippings, Gambling, 1939

Box 21

Folder 5

Park House Photographs, n.d.

Box 21

Folder 6

Prints, n.d.

Box 21

Folder 7

Display Panel with Watercolor Paintings, n.d.

Box 21

Folder 8

Display Panel with Watercolor Paintings, n.d.