

MONTCLAIR



CENTENNIAL

Beginnings

The “dreamer” was George Williams; the dream was an association for the spiritual, mental, and physical development of young men. It was called the Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA), and was founded in London on June 6, 1844. The idea caught on rapidly. By 1851 it had arrived in Montreal, Canada and Boston, Massachusetts.

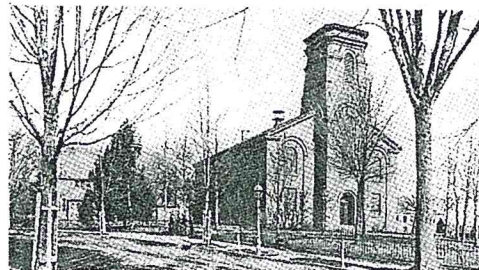
The dream began in a time of transition and turmoil: the beginning of the Industrial Age in 19th century England. Old values were being challenged. Sacred institutions were being held up to ridicule and scorn. Science was being proclaimed the god of the future, and defenders of the true God were in retreat. But here and there, the faithful not only stood their ground, but took the offensive.

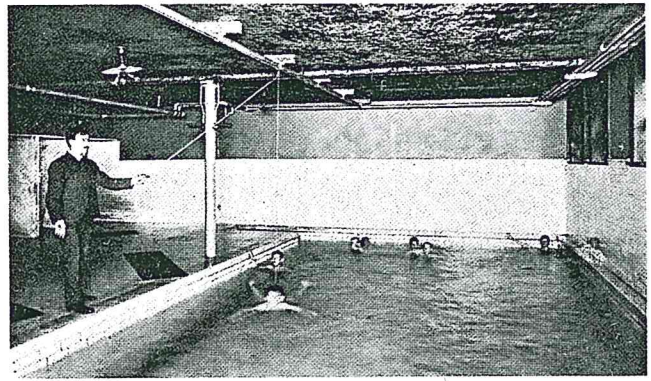
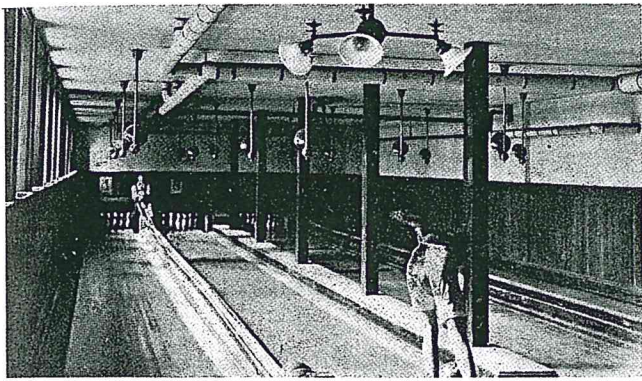
By 1853, the YMCA for Colored Men and Boys was organized in Washington, D.C. by a black man, Anthony Bowen. It was the first branch of the Y established for blacks anywhere in the world — and is still active today!

Old records show that the YMCA was first organized in Montclair during the month of October, 1867. The actual life of this organization is not certain. It did continue, however, for a period of at least ten years.

The present organization of the Montclair YMCA was effected in the year 1891. It operated for six years over a store located at 510 Bloomfield Avenue, Montclair. The need for more complete Y facilities was so strongly felt that plans were laid to raise funds for a completely new YMCA building. This dream was achieved, and a new Y was built, located at 538 Bloomfield Avenue, Montclair at a cost of \$80,000 and was dedicated on May 4, 1899. “The erection of this building was largely made possible by a generous gift from Mr. Joseph Van Vleck.” The Y grew in stature and in 25 years the building had outlived its usefulness.

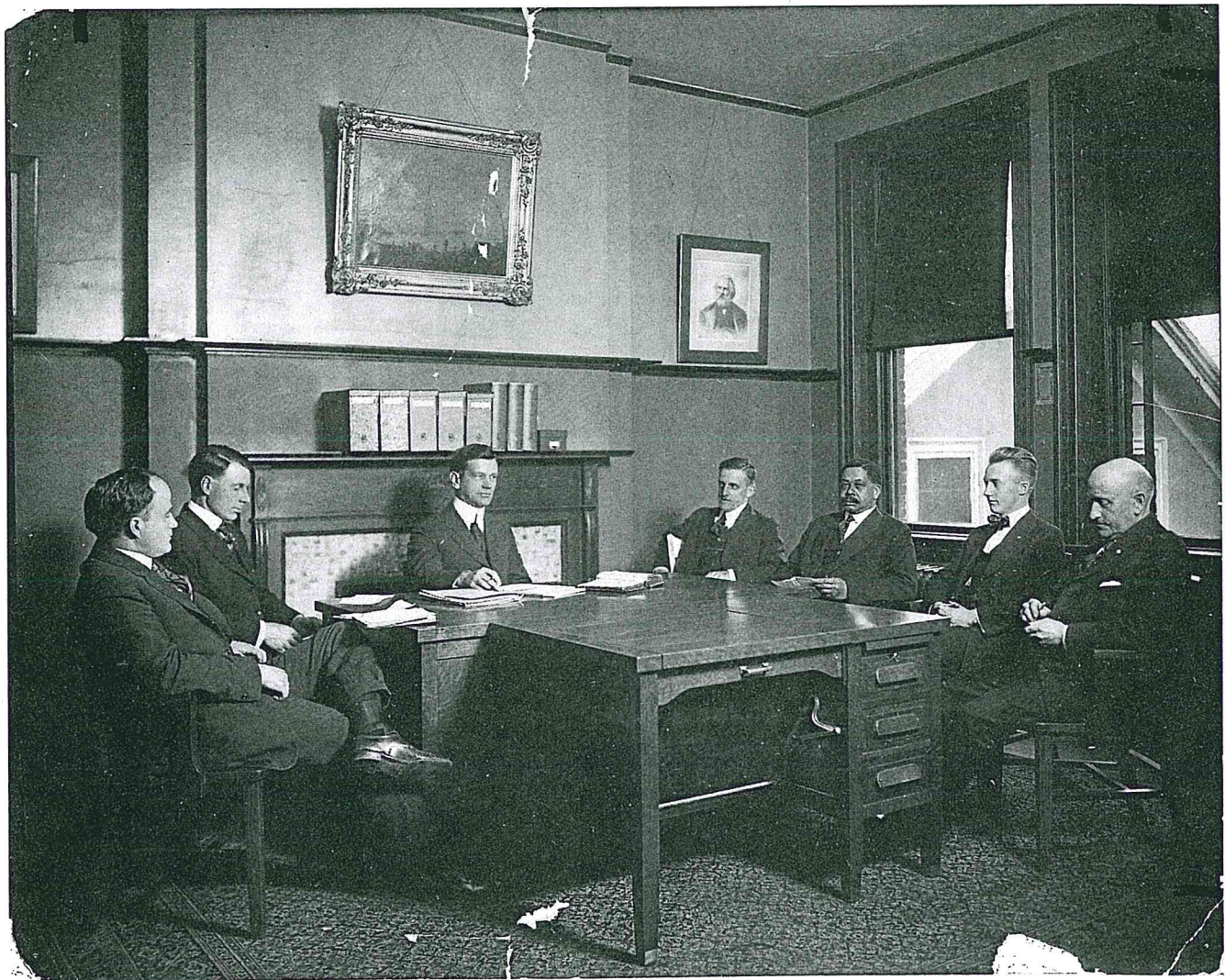
First Presbyterian Church





There was 'active use' of bowling alleys until 1942 when Town alleys became popular. Below: Staff members of Montclair YMCA at 538 Bloomfield Avenue are, left to right, James Grant, Membership Secretary; Mr. Denman, Physical Director; Merton L. Beebe, General Secretary; Roger Woodbury, Boy's Work Secretary; Charles H. Bullock Sr. General Secretary of Washington Street Branch; Frank

Gartley, Assistant Physical Director; and Mr. Russell, Secretary. Top right: Swim instruction at 538. A fully clothed, instructor guides a student by pulley with harness around his waist. Pool use was for men exclusively. In 1904 women petitioned for use but were denied. No provisions had been made to accomodate them in the design of the locker rooms.



25 Park St.

Anticipating its needs, the Y had purchased in 1920 the property known as the Carter Homestead, located at 21 Park Place Street. Plans for a new building progressed. Three capital campaign funds produced the present facility.

In 1923 a citizens survey committee, known as the committee of 21, was appointed to study the future needs of the Montclair YMCA. After exhaustive study it made definite recommendations.

At this time the Montclair YMCA pioneered in another direction. Included in the building plans were facilities for a thoroughly equipped Women and Girls Division. Its need was confirmed by the survey of the Committee of 21. This department advanced under the excellent leadership of Mrs. Elizabeth Johnson.

On Friday evening, Dec. 19, 1926 Governor A. Harry Moore, spoke at the opening of the new building while the Dedication ceremonies were conducted on Sunday afternoon, Dec. 21st, with Dr. John H. Mott as speaker. Two outstanding and representative Montclair citizens, Mr. James N. Jarvis and Mr. David B. Mills by their generous and timely gifts were largely responsible for the success of these financial drives.

Montclair's new central association building was built of a carefully selected Ohio brick with a color range of eleven, and with Indiana limestone trim, this semi-colonial building took its rightful place among the civic, religious and social edifices which mark the town. With a frontage of 125 feet and a depth of 130 feet this compact four story and basement structure was admirably fitted to serve Montclair's coming generations.

Building Character: The Business of the Y

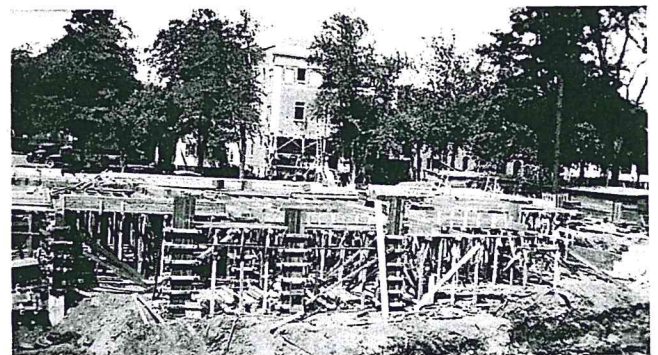
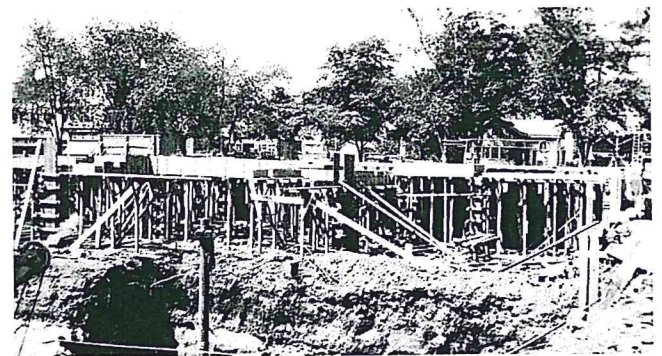
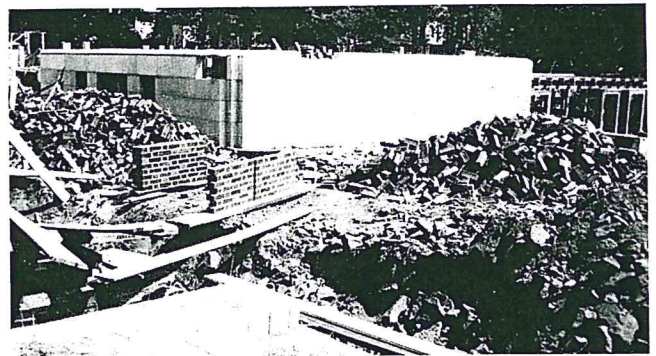
Throughout its long history, the YMCA has been many things to many people: a sports club; a social club; a night class. But all of these activities are but a means to one essential end — the shaping, molding, and building of Christian character.

In fact, from the beginning, this central objective has always been the Y's reason for being. And it remains as the paramount duty and obligation of those who oversee the day-to-day activities of the branch.

As a YMCA brochure put it in 1927, "The new Central Building... is a fitting and suitable monument to the work to which it has been dedicated. It serves as a constant reminder of the people and the days that were so strategic in the founding of our country. Such high and noble ideals as [the founding fathers] must ever be cherished and perpetuated."

While the Young Men's Christian Association is located in Montclair, it serves a large area. Some twenty-seven neighboring communities are represented in it's membership. Eighteen different nationalities are listed while members applications show 15 different denominations. Churches have cooperated with the Church Athletic League. Business, professional and civic groups made up a Commercial Athletic League. Special programs were available for postal workers and Public Service employees. Hi-Y clubs for youth were formed in Caldwell. Verona, Bloomfield and Montclair.

25 Park Street construction





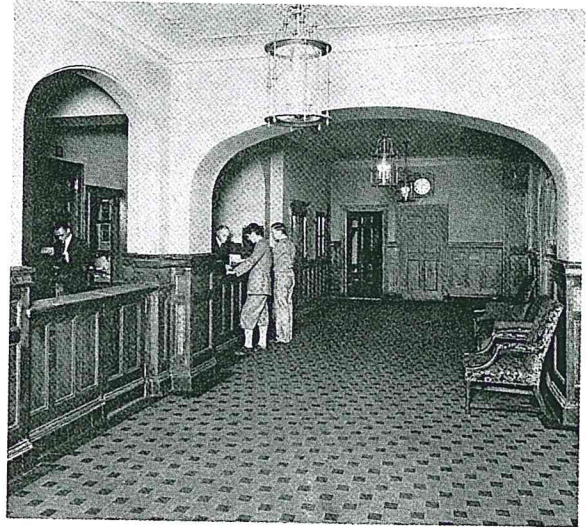
Merton L. Beebe
*General Secretary,
1911-1945*

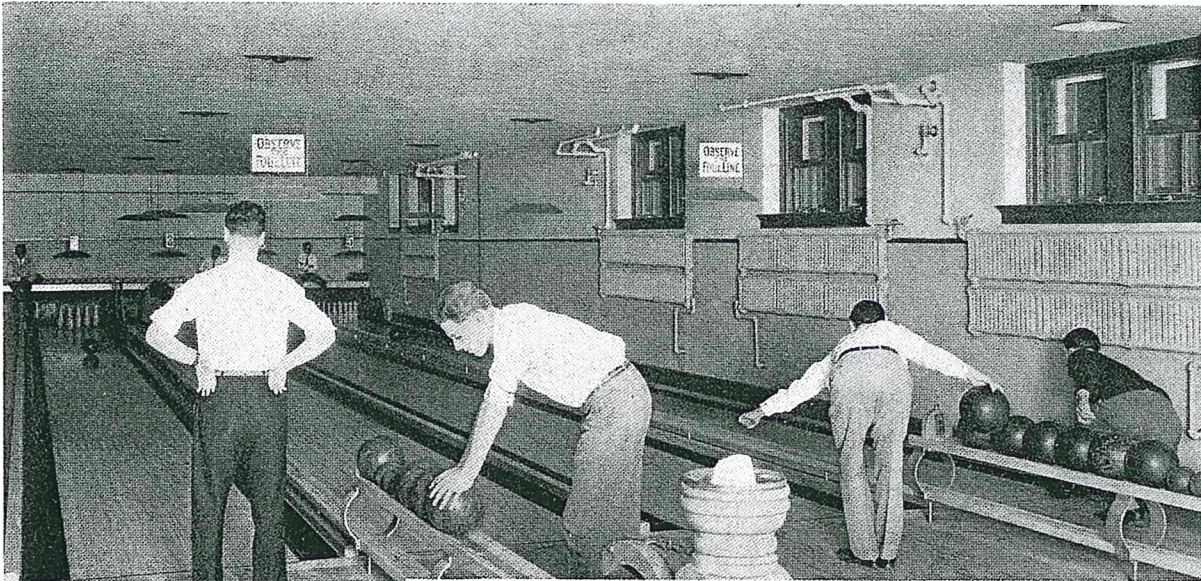
*Instrumental in moving
the YMCA facility from
538 Bloomfield Ave.
to 25 Park Street*



David B. Mills
*President of the
Board of Trustees.*

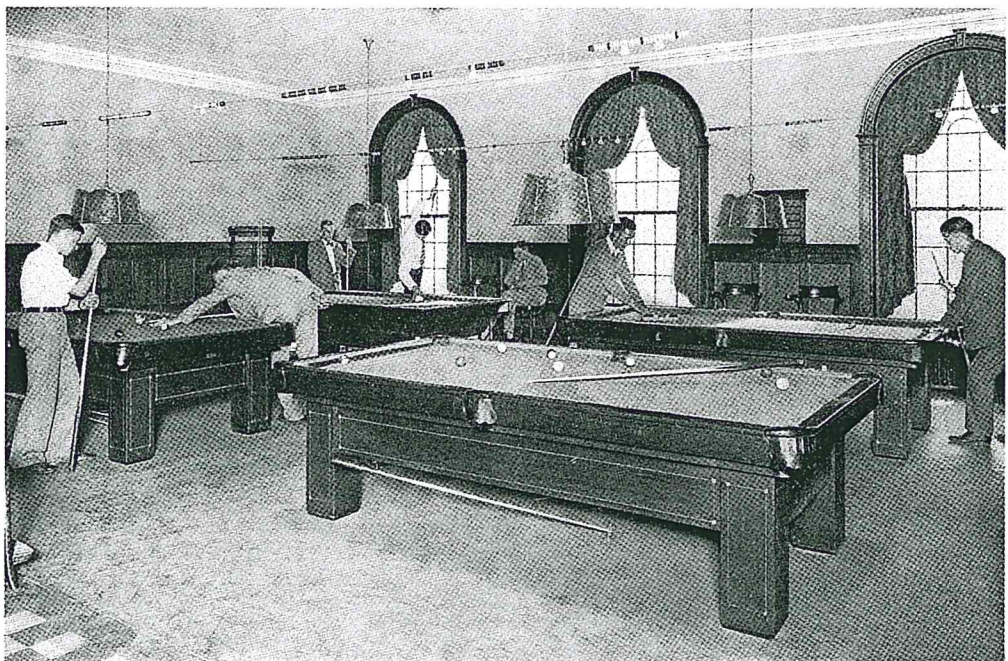
*In 1930 he donated
\$50,000 towards the
25 Park St. mortgage
indebtedness.*





It began with a sandwich and coffee after gym class. The 'Fountain Lunch' in the basement of the YMCA was popular until 1948 when restaurants opened in town.

Men enjoyed bowling also located in the basement or an 'hour of relaxation and enjoyment' in The Men's Billiard Room.

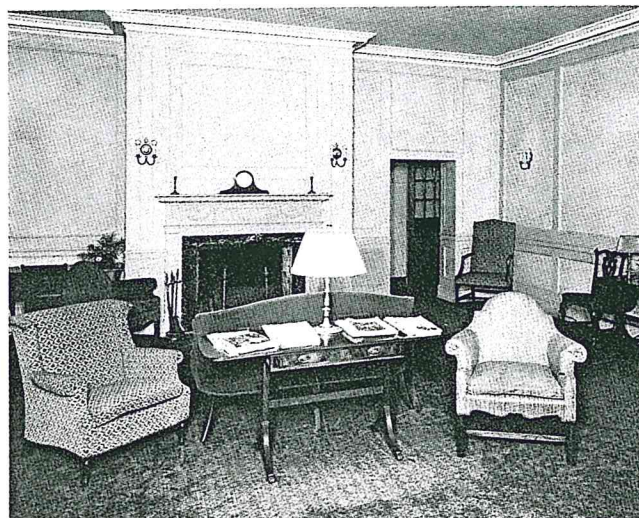


CITIZEN'S COMMITTEE OF TWENTY-ONE

Richard T. Greene, Chairman

C. Everett Bacon
O. H. Blackman
Rev. A. B. Cohoe
A. W. Hawkes
Geo. F. Howard
G. E. Huggins
James N. Jarvie
W. A. MacCormick
H. F. McConnell
A. C. Pearson
Frank G. Pickell
Henry J. Porter
H. M. Robinson
Rev. J. T. Stocking
Jesse R. Taylor
Roy E. Tomlinson
Joseph Van Vleck
Frank B. Wilson
H. F. Wilson, Jr.
Rev. E. M. Wylie

A. G. Bookwalter, Advisory Secretary



YMCA ORGANIZATIONS PAST AND PRESENT

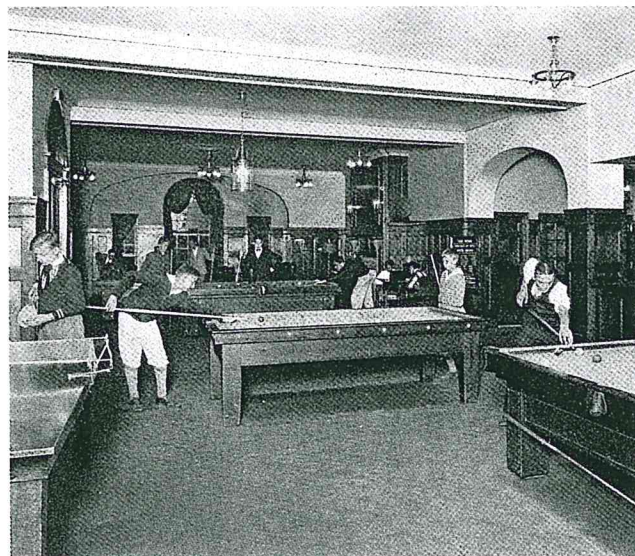
serving the needs of its members

Caddy association
Business Men's Club
Women's Auxiliary
Bowling League
Badminton Teams
Basketball League
Church Leader's Institute
Checker Club
Church Athletic Federation
Commercial Athletic Association
Dunworkin' Club
Ripples
Y's Men's International Club
The Master's Swim Team
Marlin's Swim Team
Dolphin's Swim Team
Handball and Squash Teams
Volleyball Teams
Starlettes Girl's Gymnastics
Indian Guides and Princesses
New Jersey Skin Divers

Top: The Women's Social Room, in keeping with the Colonial architecture of the building.

Center: Women's swimming class.

Bottom: The Boy's Game Room including cue-roque, reading nook, billiards and pool.



Washington Street Branch

FOUNDING OF THE COLORED BRANCH

In 1853 two years following the YMCA movement taking place in North America, Anthony Bowen a black employed as a clerk in the U.S. Patent Office in Washington, DC, and a group of his friends organized the YMCA for Colored Men and Boys. This was the first YMCA established for blacks anywhere in the world. The Anthony Bowen Branch YMCA located at 1816 Twelfth Street, NW, is still active and provides relevant community service in the City of Washington. The founders and leaders of his historical monument provided a classic example of self help. The founding occurred more than ten years

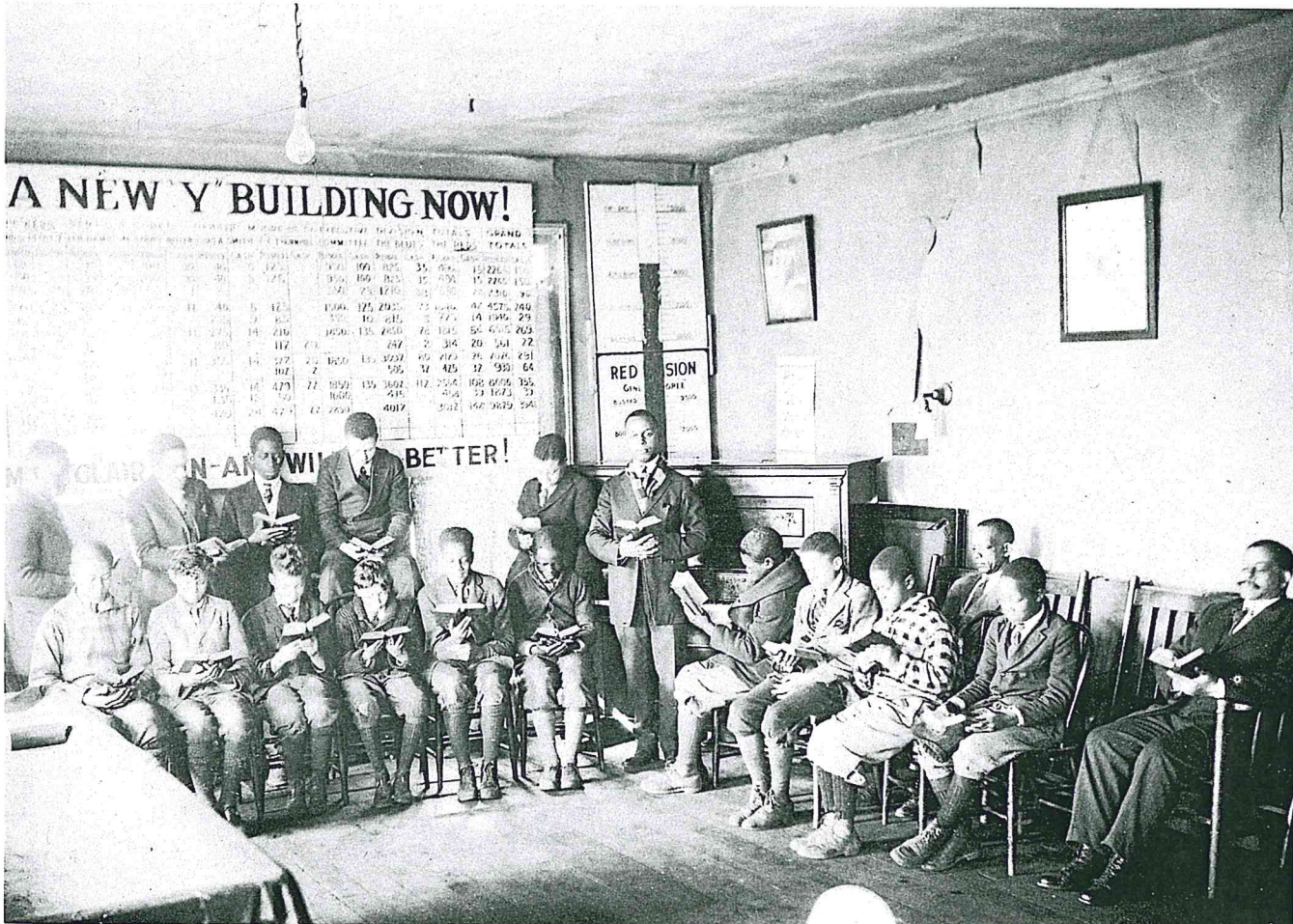
before the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation by President Abraham Lincoln.

The Founders

The founders and organizers of YMCA services to black people in the town of Montclair were stout-hearted men and women of vision who struggled during the early years to make possible a dream that one day the boys and girls, men and women would have the opportunity to develop to their highest potential. These Christian men and women not only had faith in the ultimate success of their purpose, but labored under very difficult conditions in the pursuit of their objec-

Sunday Bible Study with General Secretary Charles H. Bullock, Sr. 1916-1935 extreme right. With his enthusiasm

'The Colored Branch' moved from a room above Harrison Market to its own Washington Street building.



tive, the development of character – spiritually, mentally and physically. They believed in God and their fellowman.

Preliminary plans for a Colored Branch in the Town of Montclair were discussed at a YMCA Board of Directors meeting on April 17, 1903. The following February, 27 black men rented, for \$10 a month, a small room at 381 Bloomfield Ave., in the Old Rink (skating) Building near the corner of North Willow Street and began holding Sunday Bible classes which soon expanded to Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday evening classes as well.

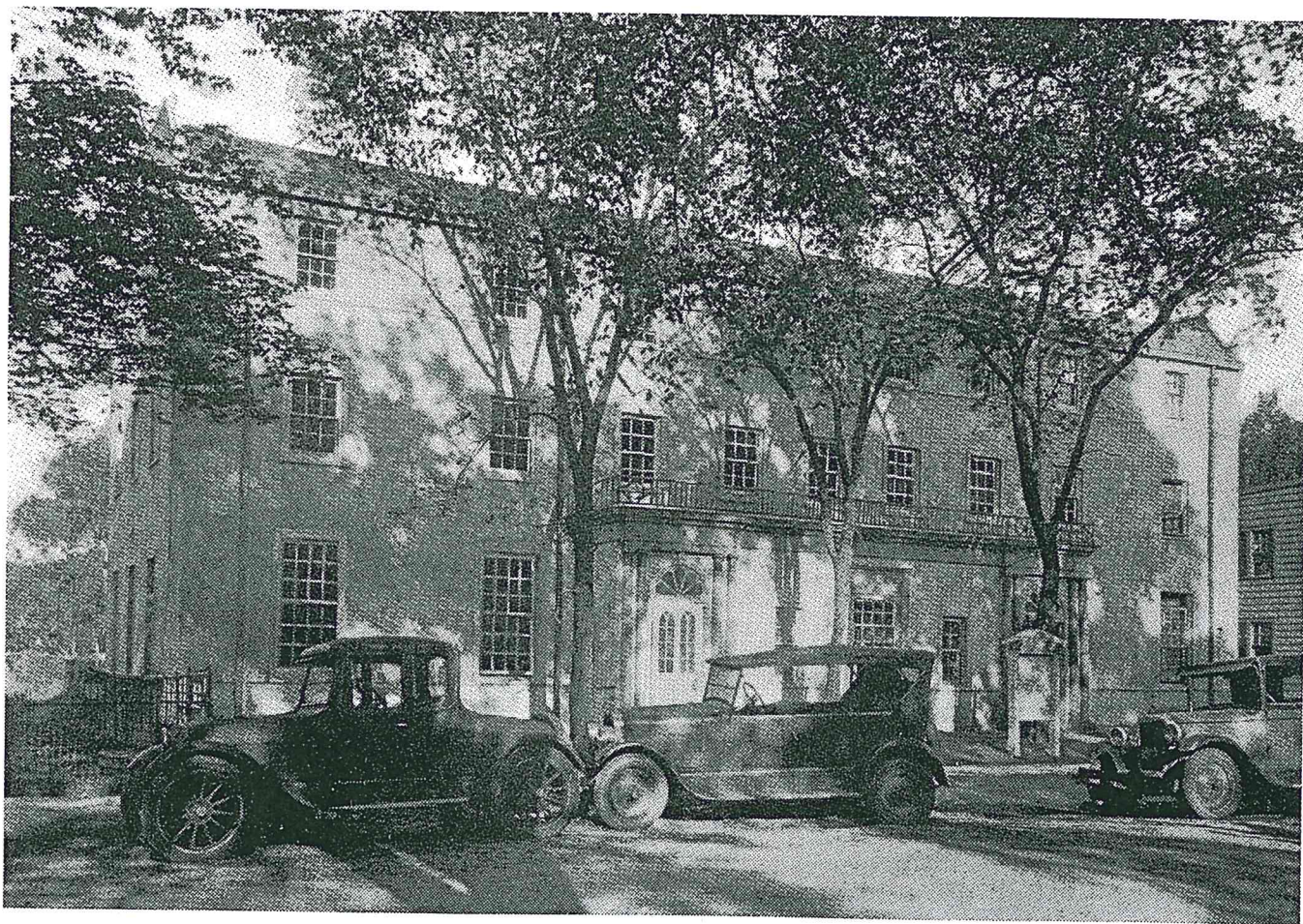
The “Rink” was destroyed by fire, and the classes moved to a new location over the old Harrison Market on Bloomfield Avenue opposite Park Street, where South Park Street is located today. On February 20, 1905, authority was granted by the YMCA Board of Directors for the organizing of a Colored Branch in the Town of Montclair. In April, W.F. DeBardelaben was hired as the first fulltime executive director of the

new branch.

He was succeeded three years later by Walter Foster, under whose guidance the first boys’ work program began, using the St. Luke’s Church gymnasium for activities. By the time Charles H. Bullock became executive director in 1916, the Branch was located at the corner of Bloomfield Ave. and Maple Pl. On January 18, 1924, a proposal was submitted to the YMCA Board to erect a Colored Branch building.

On October 8, 1925, a site on Washington Street, which was owned by the First Methodist Church in Montclair, was approved for the new building. The site, which had been used as a cemetery, was purchased for \$8,000. The relocation of bodies to Mt. Hebron Cemetery cost another \$3,000. In 1926, a contract was signed with the Architectural Bureau of the National Council YMCA. James McCutchen and Company, was hired as the builders. Ground-breaking ceremonies for the new building were held in St. Mark’s M E Church on Sunday, December 5, 1926. Dyer Hardware Com-

Washington Street Facility circa 1927.



pany donated the spade used for the Ground-breaking. On Sunday, March 13, 1927, a big mass meeting to raise additional funds for the new building was held at St. Mark's Methodist Church.

The Cornerstone-Laying Ceremony was held on April 10, 1927. The principal speaker was Channing H. Tobias, senior director for colored work, National Council YMCA, New York City. The Washington Street Branch, a \$164,000 building was made possible through the generosity of local citizens, and especially with the aid of the Julius Rosenwald Fund which contributed \$25,000. In 1948, the Washington Street build-

ing was rehabilitated at a cost of \$35,287. A total of \$11,287 was spent on the locker rooms, showers, pool and gymnasium, and \$24,000 on modernizing club rooms. The Kresge Foundation contribution was a primary factor in securing funds for the implementation of this modernization project.

The Washington Street Branch was one of the few complete buildings for 'colored' youth in the state and served as a model and inspiration for other communities.

In 1903 the Branch met in a room then moved to a store. When they moved into 39 Washington Street it was reported, "This is a splendid edifice, dedicated to youth and to the building of a strong Christian society." It has grown from a chartered membership of 106 young men to the present day 16,000 young boys and girls.

Women's Auxiliary

The colored Women's Auxiliary was organized in 1905. Mrs. H. Spence Bell, wife of the Chairman of the

Champion Basketball team 1926-27, practical in a church hall located behind Hillside School. First row: Archie Fitzgerald, James Austen, Kenneth Hampton, Elwood Tucker, Lewis Alexander, Teddy Robertson. Second row: Benjamin Jackson, Richard Robinson, William James, Wesley Page, Bucky Harris, Jack Hughes, Auburn Peterson, William Smith.



Committee of Management, was president from 1935 to 1959. Mrs. Virginia Mitchell, a dynamic leader and "Friend of Youth" assumed the presidency in 1959, and served until her death, March 29, 1974. Mrs. Addie Morris, wife of Hugh Morris, who was chairman of the Branch Committee of Management from 1950 through 1957, was the current president.

A Forum For Outstanding Leaders

Among the national and internationally known leaders who have appeared as guest speakers in behalf of YMCA work with the black men and boys in the Town of Montclair has been Booker T. Washington, founder, Tuskegee Institute; Dr. Channing H. Tobias, Senior Director for colored work, national council YMCA; Dr. Mordecai W. Johnson, president Howard University; Dr. Benjamin E. Mays, president, Morehouse College; Judge William H. Hastie; Jackie Robinson, first black to play baseball in the major leagues, and Dave Howell, general secretary, YMCA to Liberia, Africa.

Chairmen, Committee of Management

1905 Rev. John H. Blake	1920 Frank B. Wilson
1947 Dorland Henderson	1958 Burnwell B. Banks
1917 Edward Winslow	1940 H. Spence Bell
1950 Hugh Morris	1963 Samuel T. Allen, Sr.
1965 Samuel H. Smith	1965 Delbert H. Banks

Reorganization and merger with Park Street

In November 1959, the Committee of Management of the Washington Street Branch, voted to integrate the Washington Street Branch in all phases of activity and programming. It voted for integration of staff on all levels, programs and camp activities as well as participation on the Board and committees of the Montclair YMCA. It also voted to have all women's and girl's swim classes held at the Park Street facility until adequate space was provided at Washington St.

Assisting in the merger and reorganization were personnel from the National Council and the Central Atlantic Area Council. On January 28, 1964 the reor-



ganization became official.

The transition went smoothly. Preliminary planning by the Boards and several committees facilitated the reorganization of the Washington St. building to fit the new concepts of the programs to be offered.

The swimming pool was filled in to provide one depth for beginners' swimming instruction, new lighting and an acoustical ceiling completed the renovation. New lighting in the gym and painting upgraded this facility for all physical activities. The boys and men's locker rooms were doubled in size.

Far left: In 1943 General Secretary John Redmond made plans for children to come to the Washington Street YMCA while their parents worked. Below: Ping pong games were played until space was needed for other programs.

Charles H. Bullock

Builder of Character and Implementor of Dreams
Executive Director — 1916-1935

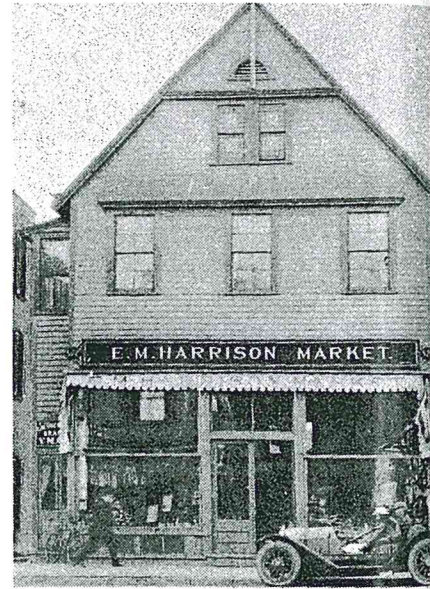
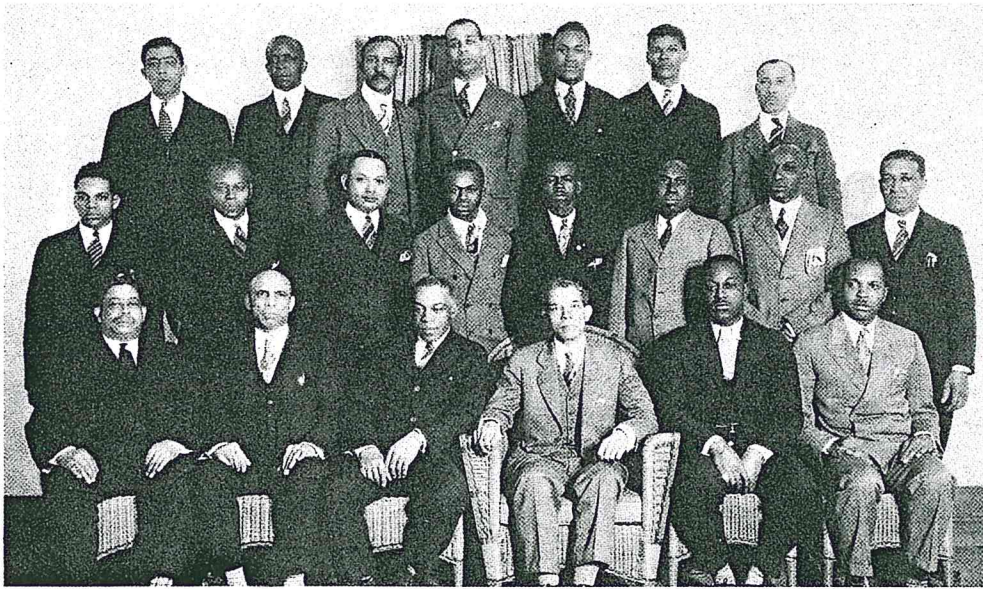
Perhaps the best person to describe this implementor of dreams is James N. Williams who served as physical director from 1927-1935 and succeeded Bullock in 1935 as the executive director of the Branch Association. Williams, in reminiscing about those eventful years recalls that, "Charles H. Bullock was a Christian who tried to make his religion a practical, effective way of living. He put his faith to work every day-in every way.

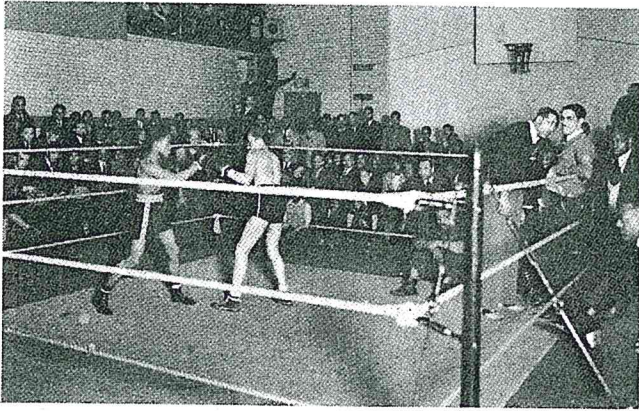
"Bullock was kind and good and believed in others—always ready to forgive and forget the cruelty of others. He had understanding and faith of people and gave them a chance to express themselves and to develop whatever talents or abilities they had. Charles Bullock was a friendly man. He was the perfect exponent of the smile and handshake. He loved to chat, and he was never too busy for a friendly visit or a talk about the weather, or anything that made for conversation.



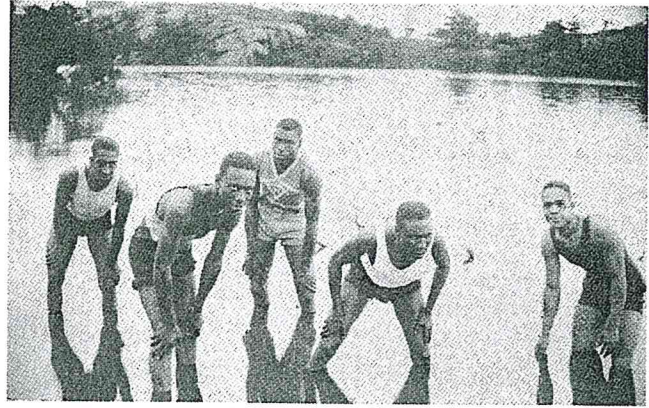
Lower left: Anthony Bowen 1809-1871, founder of the first YMCA for Colored Men and Boys in Washington, D.C. That facility is still in use. Top left: Some of the early leaders and staff of the Washington Street Branch. First row, left to right: Charles H. Bullock, Sr. Executive Director; Attorney W.P. Allen, H. Spencer Bell, Chairman of Management; Dr. W.H. Vick, Dr. John R. Fitzgerald, and Jesse McGee. Second row, left to right; James N. Williams Boys work director (who became General Secretary after Bullock); Aaron Fox, James Williams, Andrew J. Edward, Henderson Williams and Henry Brown, third row: left to right: First two unknown. The third is James E. Sadler. The fourth is unknown, Leonard

Coleman, Albert B. Cook and Robert Cotton. Top right: Harrison Market, Bloomfield Avenue opposite Park St. Second location of the Washington Street Branch in March 1905. Lower right: Women's Auxiliary, Washington Street Branch, front row left to right Mrs. W.H. Vick, Mrs. George Peters, Mrs. Charles H. Bullock, Sr. Mrs. Harriet Brown, Mrs. H. Spencer Bell, President of Auxiliary, Mrs. Harriet Jenkins, Mrs. Thomas Tibbs, Mrs. S. Satterfield and Mrs. Greene, second row; left to right Charles H. Bullock, Sr. Executive Director; next two unidentified, Miss Indiana Washington, Miss Olivia Mae, Miss Anna Belle Williams, Mrs. Maggie Greene.





Learning the art of self defense at Washington Street Branch.



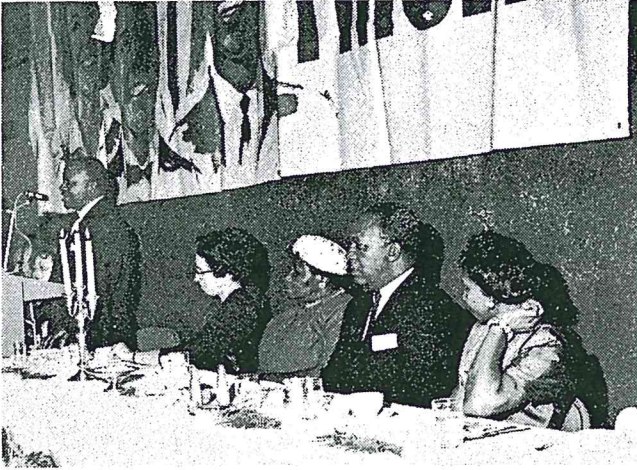
Camp swim instructors take a respite from swim and water safety instruction at the YMCA camp.



In 1978, 125th anniversary of the Black YMCA held at The Manor. Honored for outstanding contributions and encouragement to Black YMCA programs, left to right Delbert Banks, first black president of Board of Directors, Montclair YMCA, Dr. John R. Fitzgerald, President of Board of Directors, Robert Pityo-presentor, Mrs. Mary James, daughter of Charles H. Bullock, Sr., Mrs. Addie Morris and Dr. Arthur C. Thornhill.



Everett T. Christmas left, shown receiving the first 'Charles H. Bullock, Sr. Memorial Sports Award' from Charles H. Bullock, Jr. right with George S. Reed, chairman of the Washington St. Physical Committee and Secretary of Committee of Management. This award was given to the 'exceptional High School athlete of the year'.



Washington Street Branch leaders are challenged by Rev. D.C. Rice to become involved in the mind, body and spirit of the community's youth. Left to right of speaker, Mrs. Smith, Mrs. Virginia Mitchell, Mr. Samuel and Mrs. Allen. Below: Beginnings of integration of programs between Washington Street and Park St. A vocational training class at Washington St. circa 1940 and Ping pong games are shared at Washington Street.



The Italian Branch

It was not until 1925 that the concept of an Italian Branch really began to take form, and 1927 that a building was leased by the YMCA to create a facility called The Italian Christian Association at 62 Glenridge Avenue. Billiards, checkers, chess and cards, in addition to a radio, newspapers and magazines, recreational games and athletics were provided for the youth. Also there were naturalization classes.

Prior to that action, the Y had been active in providing music instruction, and instruction in learning English. In fact, the record reveals that in 1910, the book used to teach English was titled, "English for Coming Americans."

Much good work was done by Y members over those years in the Fourth Ward.

Helping the population adjust to a new culture; building the character of the membership. However, it was the harsh reality of the economic depression which forced the Italian Branch to be suspended in 1932 for lack of funds. It never re-opened.

The Italian Christian Association located at 62 Glenridge Avenue.



Youth Activities

From the beginning serving the youth of the communities has been the primary purpose of the Montclair YMCA. The Association's focus is to nurture the spiritual, mental and physical needs of the children.

The Association has served as a self-help, self-improvement organization. Responding to the needs, the YMCA has taught vocational educational and language skills, proper health habits, and social skills as well as secretarial and dressmaking skills.

It has provided cultural enrichment through sing-

a-longs, plays, crafts and reading materials and games.

To serve the youth is to "better equip the youth to go into the world." The Christian influence was strong and churches looked to the Y. to bring youth into the "fold and to manhood."

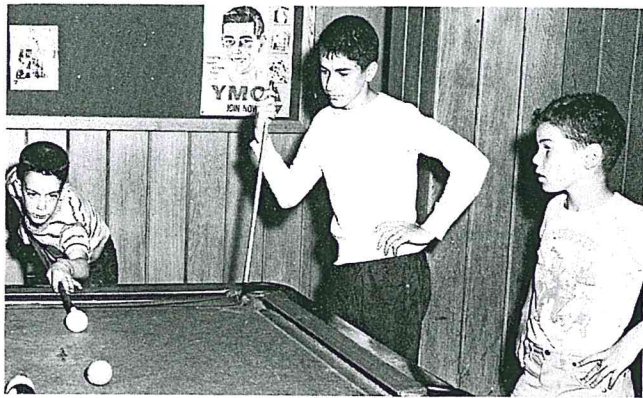
As the numbers of boys and then girls increased, programs expanded to meet the various interests of the youth.

Through the leadership and staff, the individuals needs, concerns and Christian growth are considered.

Family bonding and involvement is a necessary element. The YMCA purposely plans special events to encompass the whole family — sharing experiences.

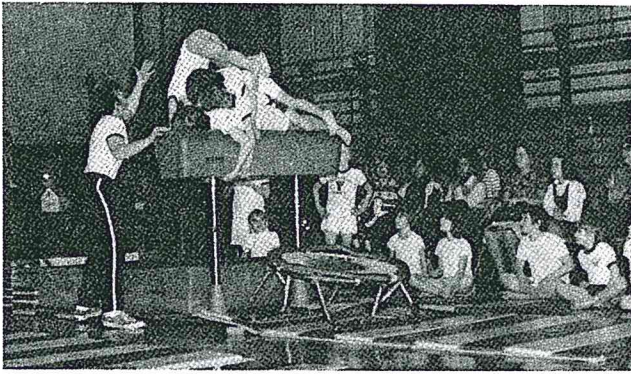
Youth athletic group circa 1900. Photographed in the church court area located between 538 Bloomfield Ave. and the First Presbyterian Church.





Programs for boys included a casual pickup game of billiards to competitive A.A.U. Swim team trials in April 1959. Gil Davis, Physical Director, stands left back. Below: Team activities including Basketball and Field Hockey in a 1903 class, improved coordination as well as team work.





Eli Synder shown above, Built competitive gymnastic teams from late 1940's Through late 1970's. The team spirit was strong as they repeatedly ranked high in National and regional competition with team and personal bests.



Leadership training programs developed potential of the individual youth. Standing second from left is Johnathon Davis our present Aquatics Director. Staff advisor is James Gwathney at far right.

