

Timeline:
The History of The Lighthouse, 1893-2003

1893

- ❖ Esther Kelly (Bradford) uses two rooms in **Episcopal Hospital** to hold Bible classes for men twice a week. The classes are geared toward helping the men overcome alcohol addiction. The men take the **Abstinence Pledge**:

I promise totally to abstain, with God's help, from all alcoholic liquors, except at the Holy Communion, or by a physician's order. And I promise to pray daily to our Heavenly Father for His strength to keep this pledge, and to zealously work in the cause of total abstinence.



Panic of 1893 gravely affects the Kensington industry.

By the 1890s, Kensington's population grew to about 100,000 and the manufactured products incurred an estimated \$100 million in revenue each year. The district was coined "A City within a City."

1895

- ❖ Esther Kelly's brother, Dr. Howard A. Kelly and the **Union Benevolent Society** help rent a 3-story building on 140 West Lehigh Avenue. Six months after its opening, the prospective members gave the building and organization its name, *The Lighthouse*. Membership began with 117 men, sixteen and older in the first month to 765 men in the first five years.
- ❖ The Union Benevolent Society gives Esther Kelly funds to begin the "**broom brigade**." Men are employed to sweep alleys and to generally clean up Kensington, which at the time was not done by the city.
- ❖ **Woman's Club and work program for girls** started. Meetings for women begin specifically addressing issues of alcoholism. They, too, take the abstinence pledge.

1896

- ❖ Baldwin School of Bryn Mawr offers financial assistance to create a day care center. The facility was named the **Baldwin Day Nursery**, and it stood on the corner of Mascher and Lehigh. The center was created to "benefit widows and deserted wives who are obliged to go into the mills and could make no suitable provision for their small children in their absence." The nursery remains open until 1939 when the need decreased.

1897

- ❖ **The Church Club of Philadelphia** helps establish **The Lighthouse Boys' Club**. The Club started at a building on Lehigh Avenue. Mr. & Mrs. John McIntyre lived on the third floor. Mr. McIntyre was the superintendent of The Boys' Club.

1897

- ❖ The Lighthouse leases 64-acres of land from the Pennsylvania Railroad at Front and Erie Streets.
- ❖ The first branch of the **Visiting Nurses Society** operates from The Lighthouse until 1905.

1898

- ❖ The full **restaurant** initiated in January 1898 was the most attractive aspect of The Lighthouse. By 1900, 250 men, women, and children sat down to a hearty dinner a day.
- ❖ Baseball leagues were first organized at The Lighthouse

1900

- ❖ *The Lantern* begins publication. The weekly paper provides information on The Lighthouse's events and includes articles of interest to the community.
- ❖ On October 13, the cornerstone was laid for **The Lighthouse Boys' Club** (now the Youth Services Center) on Somerset Street, financed by the Church Club. The building was later given to The Lighthouse in 1966.
- ❖ The Lighthouse Savings Bank occupied the storefront of Mascher and Lehigh. A penny savings bank was conducted from 1898 to 1916 when it was turned over to Western Savings Fund.

Within an area of less than five square blocks, there are thirty-three saloons, four bottlers, and numerous 'speak easies.'

1901

- ❖ The Lighthouse is incorporated.

1902

- ❖ The new **Boys' Club** building on Somerset Street opened for members on March 2.
- ❖ Women become full-fledged members of The Lighthouse.
- ❖ The Boys' Club raised dues from \$2.00 to \$3.50 for senior members in order to contribute to a swimming pool fund.

1903

- ❖ **Purpose of the Lighthouse formulated:**
 - To help people of the Kensington Community to locate, understand and solve their Social Needs and Problems.

On July 7, Mary "Mother Jones" Harris leads a protest march against low wages and child labor. The march began in Kensington and ended at Oyster Bay, New York at the summer home of then president, Theodore Roosevelt.

When textile operatives called for shorter hours and were refused by the Manufacturers' Association, they mounted a general strike in June 1903. Though it failed, the strike was the first salvo in the sequence of twentieth-century conflicts that surged through working-class Kensington

1904

- ❖ Esther Kelly (Bradford) along with four other women take residence in 144 W. Lehigh Avenue where the Women's and Girl's Club met.
- ❖ **The Lighthouse Field** at Front and Erie Avenues 17-acre lot that is leased from Pennsylvania Railroad.

1905

- ❖ Miss Esther Kelly marries fellow board member, Robert Bradford. They enlarge the residence at 144-146 Lehigh Avenue.
- ❖ **The Philadelphia Orchestra** performs several concerts at The Lighthouse.

1907

- ❖ The Lighthouse lays the cornerstone of the Benjamin Franklin Clyde Memorial building at 152 W. Lehigh Avenue on July 21. George Wharton Pepper made an address. Mrs. Clyde deposited a metal box with various relics in the stone.

1908

- ❖ The Men's Club moves to the present building at 152 W. Lehigh Avenue. The building is the gift of the wife of and in honor of Benjamin Franklin Clyde.
- ❖ After the opening of 152 W. Lehigh Avenue, the women immediately move their quarters from 140 to 144 W. Lehigh Avenue.

Kensington suffers a paralysis in production, which then affects the Kensington economy and morale.

1909

- ❖ **Women's Suffrage** meetings are held at The Lighthouse.
- ❖ Sports are held at the farm. The Lighthouse barred all teams connected with the saloons.

1910

- ❖ A new roof garden opens on July 25 in the Clyde Memorial building at 152 West Lehigh Avenue.

On February 19, The Amalgamated Car Men's Unit strike against Rapid Transit Company demanding a three cent per hour pay raise. Textile workers joined the transit workers in their strike and riot against running the rail line through the district. February 20-23, a violent unrest ensues in Kensington due to strike. Four people killed.

1911

- ❖ The Pennsylvania Association for Prevention of Tuberculosis sponsors Fresh Air School on roof garden at 152 W. Lehigh Avenue for tubercular children. The garden was used regularly especially on the weekends for dances.
- ❖ The Kensington Branch of the **Settlement Music School** established at The Lighthouse, located at 2663 North Masher Street.

1912

- ❖ The **Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts** holds the first of many exhibitions at The Lighthouse.

1913

- ❖ Several members of the Women's and Girls' Club attend the **Women's Suffrage Parade** in Washington, DC on March 13.



1913

The United States Congress passes a bill to eliminate child labor.

1914

- ❖ In November 1914, Kensington was faced with a catastrophic rise in unemployment. In cooperation with the **Emergency Aid Committee**, The Lighthouse supplied work and relief to Kensington's unemployed, distributing \$31,170 until September 1915.

1914-1919

World War I

1915

- ❖ The **20th Anniversary** of The Lighthouse celebrated. Trees are planted at the field. This is the first indication that The Lighthouse celebrated its beginnings from 1893 *and* 1895, the latter being the date the organization adopted the official name.



1916

- ❖ Western Savings Fund opened becoming the first savings bank operated in the Kensington area.

1917

Under the Jones Act, Puerto Rico is declared a United States Territory, and Puerto Ricans are made US citizens.

1920

- ❖ Students from the **Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts** present the First Annual Exhibition of Paintings.

1920

❖ **A Second Version of the Purpose of the Lighthouse formulated:**

- To maintain a neighborhood center
- To strengthen family life within the neighborhood
- To develop goodwill among neighbors, regardless of race, religion, creed or color.
- To develop leadership in the neighborhoods
- To improve conditions
- To introduce and develop cultural standards otherwise lying unknown.

1920s-1930s

Kensington was until this time the capitol of the textile industry in the country. Decline of the textile industry begins, gravely affecting the Kensington economy and employment.

1921

- ❖ Mr. Elmer Schroeder serves as Executive Director of Boys' Club from 1921 to 1931. He later goes on to become a manager for the US Olympic Soccer team of which seven boys from The Lighthouse participate.
- ❖ Through a donation from Dr. Howard Kelly of \$18,000 clears the mortgage on The Lighthouse Field.

1922

- ❖ John McIntyre dies. Known to most as "Old Mac," he served as the superintendent of the Boys' Club since 1898.

1923

- ❖ On July 18, a fire sweeps through The Lighthouse building at 152 W. Lehigh Avenue from the basement to the roof. There is under \$10,000 in damages to the building.
- ❖ The **Annual May Festival** is held at The Lighthouse Field. Festivities include learning folk dance, making costumes, performing the May Pole dance, and crowning the May Queen and Prince Lighthouse. International Workers Day , the festival is celebrated on May 1st, commemorating the struggle of working people of the world.

1928

- ❖ Esther Bradford purchases a farm at **Chester Springs** and converts the land into a camp in memory of her mother. Exclusively for boys, the camp remains open until 1957.

1929

- ❖ In lieu of the country's worsening economy, The Lighthouse takes several steps to alleviate the financial burdens of its members. The dues of the Men's' Club was lowered from 60 cents to 30 cents. The Lighthouse rents a house at 2600 Hancock Street for clothes distribution. The first floor of "152" is open for men out of work. Also, The Lighthouse staff receives wage and salary cuts in 1933.

The Great Depression begins.

1931

- ❖ Fred Woerner serves as director of the Boys' Club until 1946. Woerner was a member of the Boys Club since 1922, and he served as Assistant Director before being promoted.



1932

- ❖ The founder, Mrs. Esther Bradford resigns from her post as president of The Lighthouse Board. Mr. & Mrs. Bradford never received a salary for their work done at The Lighthouse.

1933

- ❖ Fifteen unemployed men of the Lighthouse repair houses on Waterloo Street.

1937



- ❖ Esther Bradford receives the **Gimbel Award**. Mrs. Bradford presents the \$1,000 award to The Lighthouse to be used to enclose the lower section of the barn of the camp at Chester Springs for a dining hall and kitchen.

- ❖ Dr. Howard Kelly also donated \$4200 for a pool at the camp.

1939-1945

World War II begins.



1940

- ❖ The Lighthouse is the largest single soccer organization in the world.



1942

- ❖ **The Philadelphia Eagles** practice at The Lighthouse Field.

1943

- ❖ Air raid alerts and air raid shelter established at The Lighthouse.
- ❖ Three Japanese, David Monji, Hideo Tanaka, and Naohiko Sekino arrive from relocation camps.

1945

- ❖ Some of the Boys' Club members create **Lighthouse Memorial Post #830** for veterans. The Memorial Post is part of the American Legion.
- ❖ Mrs. Esther Bradford dies on August 24.

A great post-war wave of Puerto Rican immigration to the United States begins.

1946

- ❖ A fire occurs at the Chester Springs camp that burns the 3rd floor and roof of farmhouse.
- ❖ X-Ray clinic held at 152 with 276 people attending on the first day. The overall attendance reached 15,000.

1949

- ❖ The Lighthouse builds new house for the Field.



1950

- ❖ E. R. Tingley resigns as Executive Director.

**Korean War
1950-1953**

1951

- ❖ The Music School moves to 140 Lehigh Avenue from Mascher Street. The Mascher Street houses are turned into apartment for residents.

1952

- ❖ Fire wrecks barn and camping season at the Lighthouse Camp at Chester Springs.
- ❖ A group of African-American boys comprise a basketball team and apply for membership.

**Puerto Rico becomes a Commonwealth.
The industrial incentives act of 1947 formally initiated what is known today as "Operation Bootstrap," luring many Puerto Ricans to cities like Philadelphia and New York City in search of jobs.**

1953

- ❖ Ten African-American members sign up at Boys' Club.
- ❖ **60th Anniversary Dinner** held in 141 Gym.

1954

- ❖ **Margaret Toy at the request of the Philadelphia Health and Welfare Council and funded by the Henrietta Tower Wurtz Foundation pioneers the first Meals on Wheels Program.** The program serves one hot and one cold meal to elderly people unable to do so for themselves. The first route serves 10 people. The program continues from the Lighthouse until 1966. However, the program takes flight throughout the country soon after the Philadelphia pilot.



- ❖ **Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey Circus** use The Lighthouse field for their Philadelphia site.

1955

- ❖ An arts program is instituted at The Lighthouse and assigned a director to develop and coordinate all art activities, including children's theater, modern dance, painting, ceramics and the music school.

1956

- ❖ The Meals on Wheels Program receives the **Benjamin Rush Award from the Philadelphia County Medical Association.**



- ❖ Experimental Arts and Music camp begins at Chester Springs.
- ❖ Gloria Tollerson becomes the **first black worker on staff.**

1957

- ❖ The Lighthouse sells the Chester Springs property and purchases new **camp in Pine Grove, Pennsylvania.** The camp becomes co-educational.
- ❖ **The Clyde Beatty Circus** opens on Sunday, May 26, an eight-day engagement at The Lighthouse Field.
- ❖ Northeast High School is moved to the Northeast, the most dramatic example of "white flight." The school left behind is renamed Edison.

1959

- ❖ An **arts and music camp** is added and family camping also begins at Pine Grove. Subjects include piano, voice, dance, theater, and painting.
- ❖ The closing of The Lighthouse Field and the consolidation of programs and buildings are considered in order to balance the budget allotted by the United Fund. The community protests the possible closing of The Lighthouse field. The field remains open.

1960

- ❖ **Group Services Program** for “disturbed” boys is established, and is financed by the National Institute of Mental Health.

1961

Vietnam War 1961-1975

- ❖ Executive Director, Paul Jans leaves The Lighthouse to head the **Hull House**, a settlement house in Chicago begun by Jane Addams in 1893. Don Hamilton is appointed.
- ❖ Federal, State and local officials visits The Lighthouse to find out about the Meals on Wheels Program. The officials were in Philadelphia attending the **White House Regional Conference on Aging**.
- ❖ Mrs. Hample starts **Cub Scouts** at The Lighthouse with men and women from the neighborhood as leaders. The **Boy Scouts** is added later.

- ❖ **Church-Community Project** co-sponsored by the Philadelphia Council of Churches to assist local churches in developing ways to meet needs within their neighborhoods or to cooperate with other churches and social agencies in the community.

1963

- ❖ Organized at The Lighthouse, the **Norris Community Council**, the **Norris Community Profession Group** and Public Assistance Recipients help to focus attention on pressing problems of the area.
- ❖ The **Puerto Rican Drum and Bugle Corps** begins at The Lighthouse.
- ❖ **Reading Day Camp and the Tutorial Project** for junior high school students established in cooperation with the Citizens Committee on Public Education.

On August 28, 1963, March on Washington takes place as part of the Civil Rights Movement.

1964

- ❖ Reading Program is incorporated into a day camp, facilitated by The Lighthouse and the Citizens Committee on Public Education.
- ❖ Miss Ann Harbison and Fred Woerner are recognized for 25 years of outstanding service to the Kensington community.
- ❖ Music school closes and moves to the Northeast due low enrollment.

1964

- ❖ Don Hamilton helps a family of color referred by the Germantown settlement move into a house in Kensington. He also helped to see that white neighbors accepted the family.



1964

Lyndon B. Johnson persuades the Congress to pass the Civil Rights Act.

1965

- ❖ Golden Age camping begins.

1965

- ❖ On November 6, Lighthouse Council's Testimonial honors **Agnes McDonald** and **Margaret Toy**. McDonald served as Director of the Girl's Club, and Toy ran the Meal on Wheels program. They were both awarded the Philadelphia bowl.

Immigration Act passed by Congress during Lyndon B. Johnson's presidency.

1966

- ❖ The Church Club gives the Somerset Street Building to The Lighthouse.

1967

- ❖ On April 17, the archives of The Lighthouse are officially handed to the **Historical Society of Pennsylvania**.

1968

- ❖ A Kensington version of the "**West Side Story**" staged at The Lighthouse with neighborhood youths.
- ❖ Testimonial dinner honors Herb Smith for 48 years of service to The Lighthouse.

1969

- ❖ Throughout the 1960s, The Lighthouse undergoes re-evaluation of its programming surrounding athletics and social services. The issue becomes a concern of tradition versus change. In the end, The Lighthouse board unanimously reaffirms its commitments to run dual program in community of recreation and social welfare.



- ❖ The United Neighbors Kensington Civic Association campaign to rid streets of abandoned cars.

1970

- ❖ Concerned residents hold a three-day demonstration in front of The Lighthouse against the selling of the Lighthouse Field. The demonstration ends with a soccer game.



- ❖ Free breakfasts start at The Lighthouse. The program sparks controversy and threatens funding because the **Young Lords** and members of the **Black Panther Party** sponsor the breakfasts.



- ❖ The “**Committee of 11**,” a citizens group, rallies against The Lighthouse for allowing the breakfasts. The group of concerned citizens initially began to resist The Lighthouse’s increase devotion to social services over sports programs.

- ❖ The Lighthouse hosts a cooperative food buying program, but the program is met with opposition because with the food, clients received a copy of the radical underground newspaper, *Free Pass*.

Crowd protests a family that moves into a Kensington area home. The mother was white, but had been married to a Puerto Rican man.

1971

- ❖ The Lighthouse is awarded the **Torchlighter Award** for its efforts with the United Fund Torch Drive.

1971

- ❖ During this summer, hot debate ensues as many threaten to picket The Lighthouse in order to demand that two Puerto Ricans serve on the Board of Directors. The Lighthouse concedes and enlarges the new board from twelve to sixteen in order to provide a fair representation of the community.



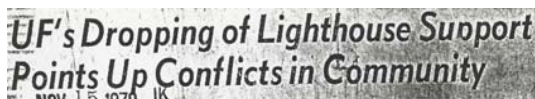
- ❖ The Lighthouse also faces the fire over whether to reorganize the organization into two separate agencies: sports and social services. It is ultimately decided that The Lighthouse remain one entity.
- ❖ Executive Director, Don Hamilton resigns. He was hired in 1962.

1972

- ❖ **The Family School** opens at The Lighthouse. The school continues to this day as a nationally accredited **Day Care Head Start Program**.
- ❖ Lighthouse meets opposition for showing an anti-war film that is deemed “un-American.” The court forbids the showing.



- ❖ **United Fund** withholds funding, and later restores allocation after receiving much pressure from concerned citizens.



- ❖ In May, 400 teens protest rock concert ban at the Lighthouse field by staging a rally and march from Jasper and Clearfield Streets to the field led by the **October 4 Organization (O4O)**. In the early 70s, O4O garnered the support from young workers to engender revolution. The group had a particularly strong following in Kensington.
- ❖ In October, Lighthouse hosts a two-day conference on the problem of abandoned housing with the theme, “**The Issue is Power, Not Plaster.**”

In August, a mob forces a Puerto Rican Family from their home in Kensington.

The Federation of Teachers strikes in Philadelphia.

1973

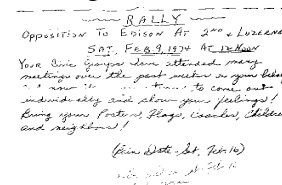
- ❖ Neighborhood meetings are held at The Lighthouse by the **Maguire Civic Association** in order to complain and combat against neighborhood problems.
- ❖ Area residents present a petition in opposition to The Lighthouse hosting of the annual Carnival.



- ❖ **Agnes McDonald's** 50th Anniversary with The Lighthouse.
- ❖ The **United Neighbors of Kensington Civic Association** call for a march for racial peace after several area youths of color are harassed.
- ❖ The Lighthouse develops an **Intensive Block Program** to reduce crime and conditions breeding and leading to crime as well as to help individuals increase knowledge and use of resources in the community.

1974

- ❖ On February 16, 300 citizens rally in opposition to students attending **Edison High School** because of the dilapidated condition of the physical plant. The school is later renamed the Julia Burgos Middle Magnet School.



1974

- ❖ In January, The Lighthouse in cooperation with the **Philadelphia Museum of Art** commissions a mural on the side of the building with the assistance of neighborhood children. The mural is designed and painted by neighborhood children and adults, “A Frog sitting under a tree by a stream.”

1975

The Latino cultural center, Taller Puertorriqueño, opens on 5th Street near Lehigh.

1976

- ❖ The Lighthouse hosts the conference, “**The Right to a Good Education for the Puerto Rican community.**” The conference is led by Masters in Social Work students at the University of Pennsylvania, Linda Maldonado and Linda Melendez.
- ❖ The Lighthouse receives significant funding to begin the **Food & Nutrition Program**. The focus is on providing emergency food and advocacy for improved nutrition in the community.
- ❖ The **Kensington Youth Council**, composed of seven local neighborhood organizations including The Lighthouse, runs summer programs in numerous neighborhoods for close to 1500 children.

1979

- ❖ Jeffrey Van Orden serves as Executive Director of The Lighthouse.
- ❖ **Kensington Joint Action Council (K.J.A.C)** continues to grow strong. At its beginnings, The Lighthouse is instrumental in helping the organization form. By 1981, KJAC is completely self-sufficient.

- ❖ **The International Year of the Child “Through Children’s Eyes”** event held at Episcopal Hospital.

1980

- ❖ **The Fairhill United Neighbors (F.U.N)** is founded.
- ❖ **The Hispanic Women’s Program** begins at The Lighthouse, providing English as a Second Language and GED classes, various workshops and counseling for area women. In 1986, the program is expanded to provide services to men with support from The William Penn Foundation.

1981

- ❖ The Lighthouse initiates **The Economic Development Program**, originally funded by the **Office of Housing and Community Development**. The program works toward the revitalization of the economy of Eastern North Philadelphia and Kensington.
- ❖ Renovation takes place on the 152 W. Lehigh Building of The Lighthouse.



1983

- ❖ The Lighthouse along with the Kensington Joint Action Council (K.J.A.C) and the Fairhill United Neighbors (F.U.N.) organize approximately 200 residents to attend the Martin Luther King Memorial Rally in Washington, DC on August 27th.

1984

- ❖ The **Community Organizing Program** of The Lighthouse successfully advocates for the rebuilding of **Edison High School** and for the commitment of **St. Christopher’s Hospital** to remain and rebuild the Kensington community.

1986

- ❖ Residents block Lehigh Avenue in order to force the city to seal an abandoned building where a fire, drug use, and suicide took place. The city tore down the building within 2 weeks.
- ❖ **The Economic Development Program** contributes staff to the **American Street Corridor Business Association** that encourages and supports local businesses.

1993

- ❖ The Lighthouse Boys’ Baseball Team wins the City Championship. The team travels to St. Louis to compete nationally.

1994

- ❖ **Shirley Thomas** ends her fifteen-year tenure at The Lighthouse. Thomas served as the Department Head of Recreation prior to her appointment as Executive Director in 1983.

1995

- ❖ The Lighthouse celebrates its 100th Anniversary.

“Operation Sunshine” begins in Kensington.

1996

- ❖ The Lighthouse hosts a dinner to honor **Patricia Schogel’s** 24 years of service primarily as Director of The Lighthouse Family School.
- ❖ **The Teen Parenting Education and Employment Program (TPEEP)** begins. The program provides support to older teens to bridge the gap between the world of the classroom and the world of work.

2000

- ❖ **The Fatherhood Initiative** begins. The program seeks to empower young men who have children, not necessarily having custody, with the experience necessary to compete in the 21st century workplace.

The Neighborhood Transition Initiative (NTI) begins in Philadelphia through The Office of newly elected mayor, John F. Street.

2001

- ❖ Former Director of Taller Puertoriquño, Johnny Irizarry is appointed as Executive Director.

2002

- ❖ **The Lighthouse Family School** is granted accreditation by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC).

2002

“Operation Safe Streets,” initiated by Mayor John Street, begins throughout Philadelphia, including the Kensington/North Philadelphia area where The Lighthouse thrives. The combination of police presence with the complete elimination of open air drug trafficking provides residents a new level of safety and security needed to again reclaim their streets without fear of violence, retribution or intimidation.

2003

- ❖ Youth Services celebrates the reopening of the pool in January made possible through a **Citizens Bank Foundation** grant that funded the renovations.
- ❖ The **Philadelphia Historic Museum Commission** and the **National Endowment for Humanities** funds the cataloguing of The Lighthouse archives held at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, making it the largest collection of a settlement house held there.
- ❖ The Lighthouse Youth Center receives grant from the **Ronald McDonald House Charities** to renovate kitchen.
- ❖ In September, **Mural Arts Program** artist, **César Viveros**, graces the entrance to the Lighthouse with mural that honors the history of The Lighthouse.
- ❖ In October, The Lighthouse hosts the regional the **United Neighborhood Centers of America (UNCA)** conference.

- ❖ Several area organizations, including The Lighthouse, host **Noches de Arte en el Barrio**. Every third Friday of the month, cultural events including musical performances, foods, and art exhibitions, occur simultaneously, providing entertainment for area residents.

THEMES AND CONSIDERTIONS OF THE 110-YEAR HISTORY THE LIGHTHOUSE

Why did Esther W. Kelly Bradford initially feel the need to serve that community? What was the purpose of The Lighthouse in Kensington?

The philosophy of the settlement house movement was that the whole of society benefits when the educated classes commingle with the less-educated and poor workers.

Although Esther Bradford had a slightly different approach. One article quoted her as saying the following: “Our work at the Lighthouse is not along any prescribed lines. I might say it was originally planned to follow in the wake of Jane Addams’ Hull House in Chicago, only that we never first provided a building or classes for any specific purpose. We waited until the need made itself felt and then went about supplying what was thought the best possible solution. In that way, we have met actual needs and saved hundreds of dollars in experimentation.”¹ The original motto, “Let the Lower Lights be Burning,” strived to convey this message hope:

Let the Lower Lights be Burning

Brightly beams our Father’s mercy
From His light-house evermore;
But to us He gives the keeping
Of the lights along the shore.

Let the lower lights be burning!
Send a gleam across the wave!
Some poor fainting, struggling seaman
You may rescue, you may save.

¹ “Lighthouse, Famous Community Center, Made Thousands Happy.” *Public Ledger*, April 20, 1924, p.8.

Trim your feeble lamp, my brother;
Some poor seaman tempest-tossed,
Trying now to make the harbor
In the darkness may be lost.²

Clearly, Esther Bradford was committed to helping those in need. Formerly Miss Esther Warner Kelly, daughter of one of Philadelphia’s oldest families, she “left home of refinement and a life of ease to take up her work in that section of the city.”³ She wanted to serve as a “lower light” for the Kensington community.

Harry Silcox’s take on the thriving industrial area of Kensington in his text “Kensington: From Fishing Village to Industrial Center (1800-1920)” in *Kensington History: Stories and Memories*, differs from the impression given by the Bradfords within The Lighthouse annual reports. While Silcox claims that “the population grew, work abounded, and family life flourished,” The Lighthouse’s interpretation of family life due to the industry was slightly more negative. Reflected in their notes is the tone of despair. The overabundance of saloons and bottlers led to a destructive family life pattern in that the children, and especially the men did not have anywhere to turn except to alcohol. According to the annual reports, the people were enslaved to their underpaid jobs and needed a healthy outlet. They found that outlet in The Lighthouse. Though our society has changed quite drastically, the desire to aid working-class Philadelphians of Kensington was consistently incorporated in the day-to-day livelihood of the organization: “The purpose and business of The Lighthouse shall be to establish and maintain, without profit, a place or places in the City of Philadelphia in which shall be afforded to the wage earners of Philadelphia the advantages and opportunities of a Club for social enjoyment and recreation.”

How instrumental was the Lighthouse in dealing with issues with poverty and hunger? What impact has industry and employment

² “Let the Lower Lights be Burning,” *The Lighthouse Lantern*, (October 1900), p. 1.

³ Ibid.

had on the Kensington community? How has The Lighthouse responded to the economic trends?

Esther Bradford was always intent on providing assistance to the area's residents since the inception of The Lighthouse. She began the organization during the economic stresses of the Panic of 1893. As the organization grew in number, recognition, and usage, the developing fluctuation in employment called for appropriate responses.

In 1895, The Union Benevolent Society gave Esther Kelly funds to begin the famous 'broom brigade.' Men were employed to sweep alleys and to generally clean up Kensington, which at the time was not done by the city.

In lieu of the country's worsening economy during the years of the Depression beginning in 1929, the dues of the Mens' Club were lowered from 60 to 30 cents. Also, The Lighthouse rented a house at 2600 Hancock Street for clothes distribution, and the first floor of "152" was open for men out of work. The Lighthouse staff even received wage and salary cuts in 1933.

The Lighthouse was always intended as a safe haven for the citizens or "wage earners" of Kensington/North Philadelphia. Of course, the underlying goals were to provide a non-alcoholic environment wherein people could socialize and find recreation. In fact, the provision of meals was a complementary aspect for assisting area families. Since 1898, The Lighthouse ran a full restaurant. It was one of the most attractive aspects of the organization. By 1900, the restaurant served 250 men, women and children who sat down for hearty dinners every day. A new roof garden opened on July 25, 1911 in the Clyde Memorial building. A Fresh Air School opened on the roof garden for tubercular children.

In November 1914, Kensington was faced with a catastrophic rise in unemployment. In cooperation with the Emergency Aid Committee, The Lighthouse supplied work and financial relief to Kensington's unemployed, distributing \$31,170 until September 1915. Also, during the Depression in the late 1920s and 1930s, The

Lighthouse rented house at 2600 Hancock Street for clothes distribution.

The Visiting Nurses Society operated from the Lighthouse until 1905, but maintained an association with The Lighthouse. In the 1950s, the Visiting Nurses Society became aware of the growing problem of patients who were unable to care for themselves, especially meals. Through the Columbia Area Welfare Council they approached the Lighthouse and from the agency's six-month study of the problem came the first Meals Wheels project in the United States. The program served one hot and one cold meal to elderly people. The first route served 10 people. The meals were delivered Monday through Friday. Clients paid for the service, around 40 cents to 70 cents (at a cost of .58 cents to The Lighthouse for two meals). The program continued from the Lighthouse until 1966. However, the program became a national service that helps the elderly population in various cities.

The Lighthouse received significant funding to begin the Food & Nutrition Program. The focus was on providing emergency food and advocacy for improved nutrition in the community. Since 2002, The Lighthouse continues to provide emergency food for residents through the Philadelphia Share Program.

What role did women play in the development of The Lighthouse?

Although The Lighthouse began as an institution seeking to alleviate the burdens of working men in Kensington, Esther Bradford and her staff quickly responded to the needs of the women and girls as well. By 1903 (possibly earlier), A Woman's Club and Girls' Friendship Social was very active. By 1905, along with Bible classes, the women are offered gymnasium practices, but on a limited basis due to lack of space. Also, Miss Farrell conducted cooking classes after taking a special course at Drexel Institute. The girls also participated in sports by sharing the space on The Lighthouse Field and Boys' Club for tennis, soccer, and basketball.

Women have consistently played an important role in the settlement movement and community progress. Over the span of 110 years at The Lighthouse, women have maintained a continuously

strong force in helping the community. From Esther Warner Kelly Bradford with the initiation of The Lighthouse to Margaret Toy's Meals on Wheels Program to Pat Schogel and the Family Center, women have been instrumental in maintaining, growing, and providing for essential programs and services.

How did the changing demographics affect the services and outlook of The Lighthouse?

Despite William Penn's vision, the city of Philadelphia settled along the Delaware River side and not equally along the Schuylkill River. The river's edge became populated by the cities immigrants between 1800 and the Civil War.⁴ Charles Dickens is purported to have named the Kensington area "Fishtown" after a visit in the 1840s having witnessed the community's thriving fish industry. Silcox notes that with the changing industry from cotton weaving to factory production, "issues surrounding work, religious affiliations, and a lack of police became primary factors that allowed the social disruptions in the decades between 1820 and 1850."⁵ Throughout this period, ethnic tensions inflamed between Irish Catholics, English "Nativist Americans," and Irish Protestants.

The decline of the textile industry began in the 1920s and 1930s. After World War II, most industries left the community. As the jobs disappeared, many of the residents began to leave as well, leaving many of the homes in disrepair. However, many

Kensington was faced with an increasingly diverse population as more Latinos, especially from Puerto Rico, and African-Americans entered the area, most in search of employment opportunities. North Philadelphia was like most Northern cities in the United States attracting African-Americans from the South. The industrial incentives act of 1947 formally initiated what is known today as "Operation Bootstrap," luring many Puerto Ricans to cities like Philadelphia and

⁴ Dr. Harry C. Silcox, "Kensington: From Fishing Village to Industrial Center (1800-1920)," *Kensington History: Stories and Memories* (Philadelphia, PA: Brighton Press Inc., 1996), p. 14.

⁵ Silcox, p. 15.

New York City in search of jobs. The Lighthouse did not grant membership to people of color until 1953 when ten African-American boys asked to start a basketball team. With the help of the Police Corps, the Puerto Rican Drum and Bugle Corps began at The Lighthouse in 1963.

By the 1950s and 1970s, predominantly white neighborhoods resisted the presence of people of color. Northeast High School was moved to the Northeast, the most dramatic example of "white flight." The school left behind was renamed Edison High School. In 1963, one of the Executive Directors of The Lighthouse, Don Hamilton assisted a family of color referred by the Germantown settlement move into a house in Kensington. He also helped to see that white neighbors accepted the family. In August 1972, a mob forced a Puerto Rican Family from their home in Kensington.

During the summer of 1971, hot debate ensued as many threaten to picket The Lighthouse in order to demand that two Puerto Ricans serve on the Board of Directors. The Lighthouse conceded and enlarged the new board from twelve to sixteen in order to provide a fair representation of the community. The organization has continued to accommodate itself to provide the appropriate services like when in 1980 The Hispanic Women's Program began at The Lighthouse, providing English as a Second Language and GED classes, various workshops and counseling for area women. In 1986, the program is expanded to provide services to men with support from The William Penn Foundation. That program exists now as The Adult Education Program. The Lighthouse has not relented in serving the various populations of Kensington.

Why and how did the sports programs at The Lighthouse thrive?

Throughout the history of The Lighthouse, the neighborhood consistently responded to the availability of indoor and outdoor sports. The Boys' Club was the initial center for athletic programs. Activities included bowling, soccer, basketball, baseball, and tennis. The initiative was so strong on the part of the youth that the seniors of the

Boys' Club that in 1902, began a swimming pool fund. The pool was hand built in the basement of The Boys' Club not too long after. The Lighthouse leased a 17-acre lot of from the Pennsylvania Railroad in 1904, located on the corner of Front and Erie Streets. Both boys and girls for such sports as baseball, tennis, and especially, soccer used the field consistently. In 1940, The Lighthouse became the largest single soccer organization in the world. In the 1970s, many current and former participants and their families rallied against the possible sale of The Lighthouse Field.

In 1943, Woodman Edward Huplits, and Myrtle V. Cills Huplits, former members of the Boys' Club wrote a Masters Thesis on The Lighthouse Boys' Club. His sentiments in the preface relate his perspective on impact of The Boys' Club on the lives of the many children that participated in the activities. They explain: "Just as the mills and factories of Kensington have supplied financial prosperity to the workers in the community, so the Lighthouse Boys' Club has supplied inspiration, recreation, and character education to the youth of the community."⁶

The Lighthouse has over the course of its history had to continuously revisit the goals of the institution in terms of its balance between social services and sports programs. In 1970, concerned residents held a three-day demonstration in front of The Lighthouse against the selling of the Lighthouse Field. The demonstration ends with a soccer game. Again in 1971, The Lighthouse faced the fire over whether to reorganize the organization into two separate agencies: sports and social services. It is ultimately decided that The Lighthouse remain one entity.

The Lighthouse Boys' Club is now the Youth Service Center, but continues to benefit area youths. The Center provides a variety of educational, occupational, cultural, and recreational programs to 800 to 000 children and youth in the community throughout the entire year. The Lighthouse Career Exploration Program offers after-school and summer employment and training opportunities to disadvantaged

⁶ Woodman Edward Huplits and Myrtle V. Cills Huplits, "A Guiding Light: A Story of the Lighthouse Boys' Club, a Guiding Light to Sailing and Shipwrecked Youth." Webster University, 1946, p. 32.

youth. The Lighthouse Baseball Program, Summer Day Camp and young girls Basketball team, volleyball after-school and swimming programs also operate from Youth Services.

How has The Lighthouse met the needs of children?

Although The Lighthouse began as a social service for men, services for women and children became more and more prevalent. Esther Bradford very early on visited the homes of the men who were taking Bible study classes with her and the others from the Church Club of Philadelphia. Bradford took note that one helped the individual by providing for the entire family.

Baldwin School of Bryn Mawr offered financial assistance to create a day care center in 1896. The facility was named the Baldwin Day Nursery, and it stood on the corner of Mascher and Lehigh. The center was created, according to Robert Bradford, to "benefit widows and deserted wives who are obliged to go into the mills and could make no suitable provision for their small children in their absence." The nursery remained open until 1939 when the need decreased.

The clubs were organized in order to provide the boys with alternative activities to gambling, drinking, and other conceivably reckless behaviors. The clubs instead provided fellowship for the boys, often needed due to parents absence at home because of work. "The clubs are really builders of strong bodies. Their contribution to the health program is important. Through the swimming pools, the gymnasiums, and the Clubs' athletic fields youthful bodies are built up and maintained."⁷ The clubs offer safe places for recreation.

Many of the girls in Kensington began working in the mills at the legal age of 13 (some younger). This early induction into the workforce had severe consequences in Esther Bradford's eyes. The Girls' Friendship Social was initiated because, according to Esther Bradford, "they are deprived of their proper physical development, the training of their minds is discontinued and they are shut out from any competent knowledge of sewing and cooking."⁸

⁷ Huplits, p. 4.

⁸ Bradford, (1903), p. 17.

Today, The Family School and Youth Services provide outlets for sports, arts, and cultural and social activities in a healthy and safe environment.

Is there evidence of social activism present in the history of The Lighthouse?

From its inception, there was an undercurrent of social activism involved in the establishment of The Lighthouse. Esther Bradford and her fellow board members wanted to maintain the basic premise that The Lighthouse would serve as an alternative space to the saloons. Members were asked to take The Lighthouse “Total Abstinence Pledge:”

I promise totally to abstain, with God’s help, from all alcoholic liquors, except at the Holy Communion, or by a physician’s order. And I promise to pray daily to our Heavenly Father for His strength to keep this pledge, and to zealously work in the cause of total abstinence.

With this sentiment in mind, the goal was to counteract the affect of alcoholism in the community. In the Tenth Annual Report of The Lighthouse of 1905, Esther Bradford wrote the following: “Does the reader know that in Kensington almost all out-door sport is fast coming under the influence and control of the liquor dealers...who can measure the evil consequences to the boys and young men whose out-door sports have come under the patronage of the liquor men, with the saloons as their headquarters?”⁹ This ideal was taken very seriously for several years during the early history of The Lighthouse.

Other elements of activism arose in the early twentieth century. For example, Woman’s Suffrage meetings took place as early as 1909.

⁹ *The Lighthouse Tenth Annual Report* (Philadelphia), p. 21, 22.

Several members of the Women’s and Girls’ Club attended the Women’s Suffrage Parade in Washington, DC on March 13, 1913.

The 1960s and 70s was a prominent time of activism. Issues arose in 1970 when free breakfasts start at The Lighthouse, and the program sparks controversy and threatens funding because the Young Lords and members of the Black Panther Party sponsor the breakfasts. In the same year, the “Committee of 11,” a citizens group, rallied against The Lighthouse for allowing the breakfasts. The group of concerned citizens initially began to resist The Lighthouse’s increase devotion to social services over sports program. Kensington was fertile ground for activists, in general. The Lighthouse generously allowed various groups to rent out rooms in its facilities. The Lighthouse hosted a cooperative food-buying program, but the program is met with opposition because of the insertion of the radical underground newspaper, *Free Pass*, was inserted with the food.

In 1972, the Vietnam War era, Lighthouse met opposition for showing an anti-war film that is deemed “un-American.” The court eventually forbade the showing. That May, 400 teens protested rock concert ban at the Lighthouse field by staging a rally and march from Jasper and Clearfield Streets to the field led by the October 4 Organization (O4O). In the early 70s, O4O garnered the support from young workers to engender revolution. The group had a particularly strong following in Kensington.

In October, 1972, The Lighthouse hosted a two-day conference on the problem of abandoned housing with the theme, “The Issue is Power, Not Plaster.”

The Lighthouse was quite vigorously working on behalf of the community in the 1980s as well. For example, in 1984, The Community Organizing Program of The Lighthouse successfully advocates for the rebuilding of Edison High School. The support for Edison began in 1974 when on February 16, three hundred citizens rally in opposition to students attending Edison High School because of its dilapidated physical plant.

In 1984, The Lighthouse also persuaded St. Christopher’s Hospital to continue its commitment to Kensington by remaining and rebuilding the community.

Today, The Lighthouse continues to assist the community. The Lighthouse participated in the Neighborhood Transition Initiative (NTI), begun in Philadelphia in 2000 through The Office of newly elected mayor, John F. Street. Also, as a co-sponsor of the “Noches de Arte en el Barrio,” The Lighthouse persists in its efforts to stand as a center of cultural, social and recreational programming.

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