

SINCLAIR PARK COMMUNITY CENTER

HISTORICAL BUILDING DOCUMENTATION



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Historical Context

The Sinclair Park Community Center Building, designed by the eminent northwest architectural firm of Naramore, Bain, Brady and Johanson in 1943, is the last vestige of a vanished wartime housing project in Bremerton, Washington. During the rapid population growth around the Bremerton Shipyard following the attack on Pearl Harbor and the beginning of the Second World War, several mass-produced housing projects were launched, creating more than 8500 small wood frame houses and living units. The housing projects were physically organized into tight neighborhoods that could be efficiently constructed using uniform designs and mass production methods for fabrication and assembly. The Sinclair Park development, also known as Sinclair Project and Sinclair Heights, of which the Community Center Building was the hub, holds particular importance in regional social history. The neighborhood was home to primarily African American families and served as a background for a significant newly arrived immigrant population and culture. The design of the Community Center Building represents one of the first buildings, if not actually the first building designed by the now nationally prominent architectural firm of Naramore, Bain, Brady and Johanson.

The Sinclair Park Community Center and the neighborhood it was built to serve were the products of the Second World War and America's west coast response to the war in the Pacific. While the Depression of the 1930s fragmented the nation's social fabric and scattered people on the winds of economic uncertainty, the coming of World War Two brought an immediate and unifying sense of sober purpose. On the Pacific Coast, where sites braced for aerial assault after the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor, major staging points for the War in the Pacific were built or expanded by the military. In the protected waters of Puget Sound, there was a concentration of war production facilities around the deep water harbor of the historic Bremerton Naval Shipyards.



VIEW OF EAST FRONT AND SOUTH END. (SEPTEMBER 2002). PHOTOGRAPH BY TERRY RISHEL.



VIEW OF NORTH END AND EAST FRONT. (SEPTEMBER 2002). PHOTOGRAPH BY TERRY RISHEL.



VIEW OF WEST BACK. (SEPTEMBER 2002). PHOTOGRAPH BY TERRY RISHEL.

Founded by the United States Navy in 1889, the Puget Sound Naval Station on Turner Point at Bremerton was transformed by the country's efforts to rebuild the Pacific fleet after December 7, 1941. It was during this dynamic period that Sinclair Park and several other wartime housing projects on the Kitsap Peninsula appeared. The rapid construction of these housing projects often lagged behind the massive influx of wartime workers drawn to the Navy Shipyard and Ammunition Depot for work.

As of 1941 and prior to America's entry into the war, worker shortage existed but was not considered a serious factor at military facilities in the Pacific Northwest. The Puget Sound Navy Yard continued employment and recruiting policies as customary under Civil Service regulations, employing both men and women on a competitive basis by application, according to skill and experience in various trades where there existed a shortage of help.¹

Once the war began and the urgency of rebuilding the Pacific fleet took hold, worker shortage became a vital problem, both in the naval yard and private wartime industries. Extreme competition for workers left Puget Sound Navy Yard in a relatively isolated position and at a disadvantage in terms of wages, hours and government imposed conditions on workplace security and personal background.

Initial efforts to resolve the workforce problem involved the National Recruiting Program. Letters were directly mailed to prospective skilled workers promising a job upon arrival in Puget Sound Naval Yard, provided the workers paid their own fares, passed physical examinations and proved able to perform the duties of a claimed trade.² The campaign brought only a small influx of qualified workers.

A more ambitious next step was to offer free bus transportation from the point of recruitment to the Navy Yard, and in the spring of 1943, as many as 300 men were arriving daily. As the numbers began increasing, problems became apparent. The government made no provisions for meals en route or basic issues of personal finance. Recruits arrived without the pocket cash to carry them through to their first paychecks, or in some cases, even enough for the last day or two of their journey.³ Willing but sometimes desperate workers stepped off the bus without the proper clothing and shoes for industrial work, and many failed the physical examinations or were turned away because of security concerns.

Outside the shipyard, housing for the influx of workers was also proving to be a perplexing problem. The City of Bremerton Housing Authority had been organized on July 19, 1940 to supervise the construction of government financed housing units and serve as landlord. Formed by resolution of the City Commission of Bremerton, the five-man Housing Authority, first chaired by James Russell, was expected to be nearly self supporting. Public War Housing in Bremerton was primarily built to serve the needs of the Naval Shipyard, but it soon was also serving workers from the Naval Ammunition Depot west of the city, the Bangor Ammunition Depot, Keyport Naval Torpedo Station, and several smaller units. The worker dormitories near the base required men to pay in advance with no possible credit. Private rooms in the city were almost impossible to obtain and then only at exorbitant rates that only the private industry workers could afford.⁴ For many, the housing shortage was the last straw and many workers left shortly after arriving.

By late 1943, recruiting tactics changed again in an effort to retain workers. Travel by train and meals en route were provided. A credit system was created for obtaining meal tickets and boarding expenses. Credit was established at grocery, drug, and shoe stores in the city, and cash was provided through the Railway express office. For the first time, women were recruited to work at the shipyard.⁵ These new methods brought, in the six months between June 30, 1944 and July 1, 1945, a total of 16,765 new workers. Neither the women nor the men arriving were entirely single and soon the housing problem was complicated by families and single parent households.

The population of Bremerton itself was recorded at 15,134 in the 1940 census. At end of war, the figure determined by local postal records climbed to 82,227.⁶ Although an optimum employment figure for the shipyard was set at 36,000, this figure was never reached due to housing shortages. Several times recruiting had to be slowed and even stopped as available housing filled to capacity.⁷ Turnover of workers also became an employment issue. Approximately 95,000 new workers were hired during the war, yet the Yard never reached its optimal employment. The average workforce for this period remained at 23,600.⁸ The Yard was continually losing workers who took jobs closer to where they lived in Seattle, Tacoma and other nearby cities and towns. Limited housing, high rents and inflated living costs were the most commonly cited reasons.



PHOTOGRAPH OF SINCLAIR PARK, WA45-112, JANUARY 1948.
SOURCE: DIANNE P. ROBINSON, BLACK HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF KITSAP COUNTY.

As early as 1940, in an effort to remedy the housing situation, the Bremerton Housing authority took its first step toward mass produced housing units. Westpark, a cluster of wood frame housing units, was considered a "model" housing project of 600 units.

A Board on Defense Housing was established within the Navy Yard on November 4, 1940 to investigate future housing requirements and the disposition of units being constructed by the government. The Board determined at least 800 additional units were necessary. They directed the construction of Eastpark, which provided 560 new units.

Westpark opened for occupancy to civilians on April 14, 1941 and to servicemen on July 1, 1941. Plans and an architectural model of the project were displayed at the American Exposition in Paris, but for all the fanfare, Westpark took too long to build and provided far too few residences. Subsequent projects would have to be built with greater haste as the tempo of war increased.⁹

Eastpark opened the month after Westpark in August of 1941. Meanwhile, the Farm Security Administration handled the construction of dormitories for single men and women since they had built and operated similar projects for migrant farm labor.

Even with the availability of new housing units for war industry workers, rent increases were the vogue for landlords and boarding house operators. To stem the unfair practice, the Bremerton City Commission appointed a Fair Rent Committee to oversee rents and intervene in disputes. The City Commission and Housing Authority planned for 2000 additional houses and 500 dormitories to meet the pressing need. Unfortunately, building material shortages plagued construction until a governmental priority was issued. Freeze Order 121 prohibited certain mills from selling lumber to anyone other than Army, Navy, Lend Lease contractors, or local housing projects around Bremerton. By September 1942, Bremerton saw the completion of several housing projects including Sheridan Park, Anderson Cove, and additional units at West Park. Still an additional 4000 housing units were recommended over and above the amount initially anticipated in 1940.¹⁰ As of March 1943, Sinclair Park was partially complete and the first occupants settled in.

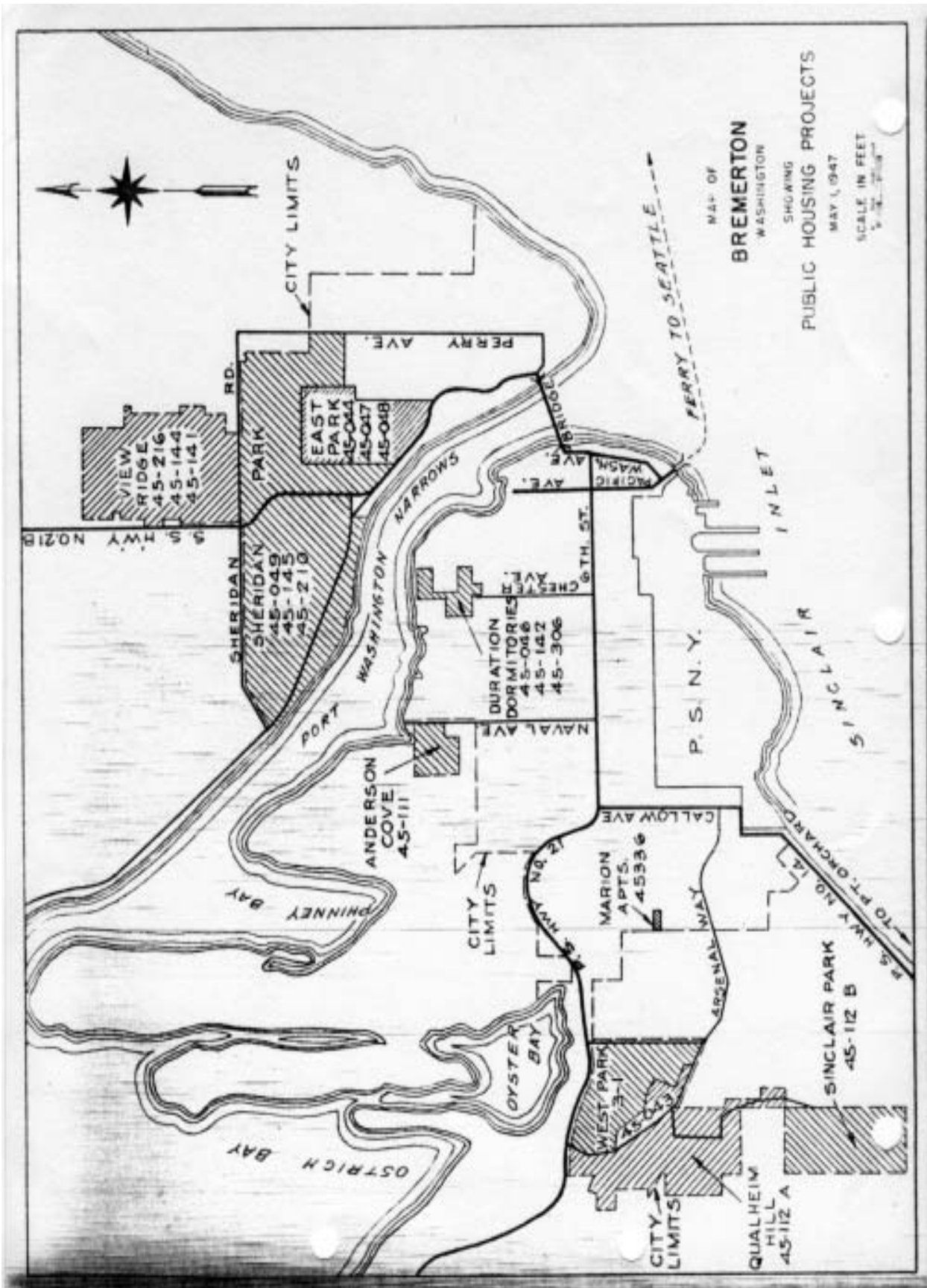
Wartime Housing

The Bremerton Housing Authority was a localized agency affiliated with the Federal Public Housing Authority (FPHA). The FPHA was designed to build and finance temporary wartime housing, constructing approximately 80,000 housing units for war workers in Washington and Oregon. The agency planned to remove all temporary 'dismountable' buildings from their projects following World War Two. The Bremerton Housing Authority functioned as the construction manager and landlord for these properties financed and directed by the FPHA.

Working with the FPHA, the Bremerton Housing Authority produced a widely distributed group of multi-unit war housing projects, including West Park (600 occupants) West Park Addition (560), View Ridge (1524), East Park (560), Sheridan Park (2226), Anderson Cove (160), and Sinclair Park (280). Just to the north of Bremerton, the Port Orchard Housing Authority built additional units at East Port Orchard (2654) and Orchard Heights (2902).¹¹

The demand for wartime housing in the Bremerton area was obviously driven by the needs of the growing workforce, but there was a much more complex set of social and economic factors influencing the lives of people living in the buildings and neighborhoods. The National Recruiting Program had cast a far net and many of the arriving wartime workers were drawn from the Midwest, upper Mississippi River Valley, cities of the rust belt and even east coast urban centers like Philadelphia.¹² The broad economic, social and cultural diversity of the newcomers dramatically changed the demographics of the Puget Sound port city and introduced ethnic groups that had not been present or only minimally represented in the city before the war. Now pressed into close and unfamiliar surroundings, newcomers and existing residents alike were confronted with both the excitement and uncertainty of entirely new neighborhoods, neighbors and customs.

Among the distinct new ethnic groups coming to Puget Sound during the war, African Americans made up perhaps the largest group, most moving from Chicago and the upper mid-west but with emigrational ties to the South. During Bremerton's wartime peak, African American families numbered as high as 10,000 people. Although government housing was expressly not segregated, projects and neighborhoods drifted into a high degree of ethnic consolidation. The Sinclair Park development became pri-



WARTIME HOUSING MAP. SOURCE: U. S. NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS ADMINISTRATION, PACIFIC ALASKA REGION FACILITIES, SEATTLE; RECORD GROUP No. 181, NAVAL DISTRICTS AND SHORE ESTABLISHMENT, 13TH NAVAL DISTRICT.

marily a home for African American workers and their families, while most of the other housing projects, West Park, View Ridge, Sheridan Park and Anderson Cove, housed predominately White families. A letter dated February 25, 1944 cited this grouping as contributing to the “unrest and unfairness to a group of people who are participating in the War effort.” A 1944 U. S. Navy report found that Naval and Civilian authorities were working towards improved conditions.¹³ Within this often conflicting context, Sinclair Park emerged as a familiar and, for the neighborhood’s brief duration, a stable foundation for the African American community. Many families living today in Bremerton trace their introductions to the region and their friends and social organizations back to Sinclair Park.

These dynamic circumstances of a concentrated cultural group prompted a well developed sense of community among Sinclair Park residents. In a time of uncertainty and racial tension, the familiarity of shared activities, culture and customs provided a welcome sense of respite and mutual support. Historic photographs and oral history interviews with former Sinclair Park residents convey a sense of a working people, earning wages, actively enjoying life and moving ahead in a meaningful manner with their futures.

Sinclair Park Housing Area

Sinclair Park was located on a hillside site to the west of downtown Bremerton and the Naval Shipyard. Assigned the military project number WA-112B, the neighborhood was laced over an 80 acre site with 280 family dwellings configured in single story, frame buildings grouped in a “C” shaped cluster. By 1944, approximately twenty-one units were occupied by enlisted personnel, with civilians living in the rest.¹⁴ The modest buildings were produced by Prefabricated Products Company of Seattle under a contract let on June 5, 1942. By late summer that year, the site was graded, the manufactured panels that made up the houses were assembled and the neighborhood was ready for occupancy. The first residents, Eugene Aires and Elwood Greer, arrived in March of 1943. Mrs. Greer arrived in June of 1943.¹⁵ At the south edge of the housing cluster, a small wood frame building was constructed to serve as a rent collection and management office. The use patterns of the small neighborhood along with the lively social needs of the residents soon led to the planning of a larger, more permanent, centrally located building.



UNDATED MAP OF SINCLAIR PARK COMMUNITY PREPARED BY THE HOUSING AUTHORITY OF THE CITY OF BREMERTON. THE COMMUNITY BUILDING IS LOCATED BETWEEN THE TWO ARMS OF HOUSING ON CARVER AVENUE. MAP COURTESY OF THE KITSAP COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY MUSEUM.



PHOTOGRAPH TAKEN IN THE WINTER OF 1944. AFRICAN AMERICAN CHILDREN IN SINCLAIR PARK PLAYED IN THE SNOW FOR THE FIRST TIME. MANY CAME FROM THE SOUTH AND SOME OF THEM HAD NEVER SEEN SNOW BEFORE SO THIS WAS A SPECIAL DAY FOR THEM. THE SCHOOLS ALLOWED THEM A DAY OFF. SOURCE: DIANNE P. ROBINSON, BLACK HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF KITSAP COUNTY.



THIS PICTURE WAS TAKEN IN SINCLAIR PARK IN 1944. THE RICHARDSON FAMILY CAME FROM NEW ORLEANS AND LIVED AT 5455 LINDEN STREET. BACK ROW: PRISCILLA RICHARDSON, MRS. MARY BROWN (PRISCILLA'S MOTHER), GEO RICHARDSON SR. (PRISCILLA'S HUSBAND), AND ETHEL MAE CAMPBELL (COUSIN). BOTTOM ROW: GEORGE RICHARDSON JR., JACOB BEASLEY (ETHEL MAE'S SON), AND PATRICIA RICHARDSON (ETHEL MAE'S DAUGHTER). SOURCE: DIANNE P. ROBINSON, BLACK HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF KITSAP COUNTY.

Although Sinclair Park was physically and architecturally similar to the nine other government housing projects around Bremerton, it became somewhat apart from the others in the minds of both the residents and the government housing offices. Glimpsed through musician Quincy Jones' autobiography, Sinclair Park was a thriving dynamic neighborhood of young families, full of the smells of savory southern meals, loud neighbors and the constant storytelling of trips to the juke joints in Seattle, church socials, and the routines of wartime work. Only eleven years old when he arrived with his father from Chicago, Jones recalled the surrounding fir forests, the farmlands and the multitude of small things that distinguish societies.

Almost two years after the neighborhood was built, the landscaping at Sinclair Park had not been completed because of lack of funds. The school bus did not come to the neighborhood because it was a mile out of the school district. Residents walked to West Park to catch the bus. The grocery store (located just at the top of the hill before entering Sinclair) and the tavern were not developed under the guidance of the local authorities and thus sometimes set their prices and policies for Sinclair Park residences at unfair rates. Residents were initially required to use the West Park post office until the Community Building was completed. The housing authority clerk in the Community Center Building simply collected rent and leased apartments; maintenance, repairs and other needs were left up to the residents. Nevertheless, the shortcomings and inequities of the neighborhood were secondary to the steady work schedules and pay checks, modest as they were. A staple in Sinclair Park were the regular community get acquainted parties that continued well past the war until 1948.¹⁶ A women's card club also made the rounds from house to house. Not even the heavy snow of 1944 deterred them from their appointed games.¹⁷

Some local families also moved to Sinclair. Delse Peebles' family was one of these. Her father worked in the Puget Sound Naval Shipyard. At the time, they were the only African American family living on Vashon Island. Eventually the lengthy commute between Vashon and Bremerton became too much and the family moved to Sinclair Park. The majority of African American families were housed in Sinclair, while others were scattered throughout other housing projects such as East Park and Port Orchard.¹⁸ On August 1, 1944, the Bremerton Housing Authority reported that they were housing 342 African-American families, of which 279 resided in

Sinclair Park. The record also shows one Filipino family in residence No. 280 in Sinclair Park. In August of 1944, Sinclair Heights, as it was also called, reached full occupancy.¹⁹

To save money, residents would sometimes have one family rent a house from the Housing Authority and then sublet two or three rooms to other families. The Housing Authority provided new furniture that residents could either rent or purchase.²⁰ Each of the 280 homes had central heating, new electric stoves and refrigerators, as well as curtains in the windows. The streets were oiled and graveled and narrow concrete sidewalks eventually fronted each yard. The only phone was in the Community Center Building until a phone booth was installed. Placed at Fifty-Sixth and Linden, the phone booth was moved after repeated damage to the glass from servicemen.²¹

Individuals often ran barbershops out of their homes to earn extra cash.²² The nursery school, sponsored by the Lanham Act under the direction of Bremerton School District 100C, operated out of a regular housing unit. Mrs. Greer worked at the nursery which was open to children between the ages of two and five. Six year olds were allowed only if they had a late birthday that kept them from entering school. Parents knew that after six in the evening they could pick up their kids at Mrs. Greer's house when they returned from work.²³ This nursery school was one of several; the others operated at Sheridan Park, East Park, West Park, and View Ridge. Certified teachers, teachers aides and housekeepers provided all day care for six days a week from 7am to 6 pm. Activities consisted of rest and play periods, meals, as well as daily health inspections. The Lanham Act, passed in April of 1943, provided federal funds for the support of Child Care facilities through 1946. This care continued until 1950 with local and state aid.²⁴

Soldiers from the army base located behind Sinclair Park would occasionally drill in the open ground at the middle of the neighborhood. On occasion, soldiers returning to base in the darkness of night would get their directions mixed up and cut through the yards of the Sinclair residences. The neighborhood at first did not have any lights except those in the residences, leaving the area in near complete darkness at night. Sometimes the soldiers would knock on a door and ask if they were going in the correct direction to return to base. The young Mrs. Greer related how she would tease her father and Mr. Ehrs, who both worked a swing shift, that bears would get them when they walked home at night.²⁵



MRS. MARIE GREER WAS ONE OF THE FIRST RESIDENTS IN SINCLAIR PARK. SHE TAUGHT IN THE CHILDREN'S NURSERY. SHE WORKED UNDER "THE LANHAM ACT," A FEDERAL GOVERNMENT PROGRAM WHICH PROVIDED ALL DAY CARE FOR CHILDREN WHOSE PARENTS WERE WORKING IN THE NAVAL SHIPYARD. SOURCE: DIANNE P. ROBINSON, BLACK HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF KITSAP COUNTY.



"TIM" BELONGED TO THE FLOYD WILLIAMS FAMILY. IN THIS 1946 PICTURE, THE BACKGROUND SHOWS THE GROUNDS IN SINCLAIR PARK. THERE WAS NO GRASS, JUST DIRT AND ROCKS. TIM KEPT WATCH OVER THE NEIGHBORHOOD. SOURCE: DIANNE P. ROBINSON, BLACK HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF KITSAP COUNTY.



FIG. 3. QUINCY JONES, ET. AL. SOURCE: *Q: THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF QUINCY JONES*. (2001).



SINCLAIR PARK COMMUNITY CHURCH SUNDAY SCHOOL ON EASTER SUNDAY, 1944. SOURCE: DIANNE P. ROBINSON, BLACK HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF KITSAP COUNTY.



ON CHRISTMAS EVE OF 1944, THE SINCLAIR PARK COMMUNITY CHURCH BURNED DOWN. IT WAS BELIEVED THAT SOMEONE SET THE CHURCH ON FIRE. THE CHURCH WAS BUILT BY THE RESIDENTS AT SINCLAIR PARK AND WAS LOCATED ON THE CORNER OF LATONA STREET. SOURCE: DIANNE P. ROBINSON, BLACK HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF KITSAP COUNTY.

As the community grew, the need for a local, accessible church became imperative for the residents. In August 1943, the Bremerton Housing Authority signed a lease with the Negro Baptist Church for a building site within Sinclair Park, with provision to remove the building within sixty days of the termination of the lease. The community church provided an important, readily accessible social and spiritual center for neighborhood residents of all denominations. Later the Hill Top Baptist Church, the precursor to the Mount Zion Baptist Church, was formed.

The Bremerton Recreation Department also assigned a worker to the neighborhood to organize programs, offer hobby and crafts classes and encourage sports and athletic activities around the community center. These efforts were half hearted and largely unsuccessful. Combined with other conditions such as bus service from the bottom of the hill rather than from the street in front of the Community Center Building a number of factors led to the further isolation of the neighborhood. A survey of residents conducted during the middle of the war ranked bus transportation, school buses, a larger community hall, playground, and a post office as the most pressing needs. If a crime was committed, the accused was given a certain number of hours or days to leave Bremerton rather than a jail sentence. Mr. Simons was the police officer who usually patrolled the neighborhood.²⁶

Despite, and to some extent because of these prevailing conditions, Sinclair Park proved a beginning for many families and their children.²⁷ Families and individuals made the best of the living and work situations that for many of the former residents interviewed was an experience they would not willingly trade for anything else. For the first time in the lives of many of the residents they were surrounded almost exclusively by other African Americans. Prior to World War II, Bremerton had only an estimated five to six African American families. As African Americans, they learned things about themselves and other African American people that they had not known before.²⁸ As such, the neighborhood was seminal to the inception of local chapters of civic groups such as the African American U.S.O., Elks Club, Carver Club, and the N.A.A.C.P. To this day, these same groups started in Sinclair continue to exert a strong influence in Bremerton.

Community Center Building

Federal housing programs during the war had an enlightened set of goals that reached beyond providing only adequate shelter. Policy statements described more than the essentials of clean walls, convenient kitchens, closet space, light, air, privacy, and sanitary facilities. They also described activities that took place in the housing areas and the development of a sense of community in the minds of the residents. This community mind set and related activities were viewed as mutually beneficial to both management and tenants by contributing to healthy family life, a basis for sympathetic and cordial relationships between tenants and management, and as encouragement for tenant initiative and responsible tenant participation in the well being of the neighborhood.

The inclusion of a community building in each housing project amid the wartime pressures to conserve materials and the priority of building housing underscores the importance placed on the role of community buildings within their neighborhood.

The central device in the model housing groups was a communal building designed for social gatherings and assembly. In concept and purpose it was described as follows: "A community building is what a housing development requires to convert it into a neighborhood, an essential constant element that forms a core to which specialized provisions are added, for recreation, health, education, commerce, civic administration."²⁹ The physical elements of a community center included meeting rooms, lounge, kitchen, refreshment bar, office and coat room in public view that could be managed by a single person, toilets, wash rooms and lockers, a gymnasium (either combined with a meeting room or separate), and club rooms smaller than a large meeting room. In design and presence, community centers were intended to serve a broad diversity of groups with a minimum of interior walls and formality. The buildings had well planned accessibility, interior circulation, indoor-outdoor flexibility, interchangeability, and the potential to be expandable and easy for people to supervise. They were also practical with rugged finishes, ease of maintenance, and the elimination of safety hazards.



WILLIE LEE MILLER (?) (LEFT) AND GLORIA STURDIVANT (RIGHT) IN SINCLAIR PARK ON SIDEWALK OF LINDEN STREET. SOURCE: DIANNE P. ROBINSON, BLACK HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF KITSAP COUNTY.

Construction of Sinclair Park Community Center Building

Located on Carver Avenue between Dexter and Linden Streets, with parking to the rear and situated between the flanking residential loops, the Sinclair Park Community Center Building was constructed in 1943. The recently formed Seattle architecture partnership of Naramore, Grainger, Brady and Johansen designed the Community Center Building. The firm also planned the Sinclair Park community as well as the Hospital in Bremerton (1945), among other buildings, before rising to national prominence. The Sinclair Park Community Center Building cost an estimated \$57,000. Comparatively, the single story frame Qualheim Hill community building with a concrete basement cost \$53,137 and provided for management, maintenance, and tenant activities. The single story brick and frame Sheridan Park community building cost \$190,018. The site of the Sinclair Park Community Center Building was purchased originally from Kitsap County for use as temporary public-financed war housing.



Bremerton Housing Authority records refer to the Community Center Building as the New Community Building as opposed to the Original Community Building. The Original Community Building was a single-story, wood framed building located further south within the neighborhood and fronted directly on Union Street.

Community Significance

The Sinclair Park Community Building entered into operation amidst substantial fanfare and celebration, even drawing then Mayor of Bremerton, L. "Hum" Kean, to the grand opening.³⁰ The Community Center Building provided important services, activities, and meeting space for a variety of organizations that otherwise would not have been possible due to lack of space in houses and the difficulty of travel to the city.

The Community Center Building quickly became an established feature within the neighborhood. The first time Quincy Jones sold a song, he received the news through the mail, picking up the letter at the post office inside the Community Center Building. Mrs. Ehrs used to unlock the Community Center Building doors for Quincy to practice at the piano after hours.³¹ Mrs. Walker, a local resident, was the first Postmistress. Another lady who had been first in line for the position returned home due to an illness in her

QUINCY JONES. SOURCE: *Q: THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF QUINCY JONES*. (2001).

family. Two nights a week, Tuesday and Thursdays from six to nine in the evening, volunteers ran a night library in the Community Center Building as a branch of the Bremerton Public Library. After work, people could check out books and the local book club met to discuss their latest book.³² During elections, voting booths were set up in the Community Center Building for neighborhood residents to vote.

Residents of all ages found recreation activities in the Community Center Building. The Elks Club used the clubroom and kitchen for meetings and conventions. The local basketball team played in the recreation room. Delse Peebles' father was one of the recreational directors that organized recreation activities in the building. Mrs. Ehrs later served as director of activities. Delse's brother was in scouting and she was a member of the drama club, both activities held in the building. The drama club put on a performance of "Jiving Macbeth" for community members. Dances were held for local teenagers in the recreation room with live bands sponsored by the Elks Club. Residents could use the hall for free, provided they reserved the space. For many children, the Community Center Building was the only place their parents would allow them to go, the juke joint being expressly off limits.³³ The only other place providing entertainment for youth and adults was the U.S.O. in downtown Bremerton, which was much more difficult to reach due to the distance and lack of buses. On occasion, members of the U.S.O. would attend activities such as dances and plays at the Sinclair Park Community Center Building. The junior chamber of commerce operated a snack bar in the building during parties, conventions, sporting events and dances.

There were few disturbances at the Community Center Building, although a group of youth arrived at the Community Center Building one Christmas with the intent of crashing a party underway. They were told they could not and were not allowed into the party. The group then went outside and proceeded to let the air out of the tires of the guests' parked cars.³⁴

The Elks Club was organized at the Community Building, along with a book club and local chapter of the N.A.A.C.P. The Elks club sponsored oratorical contests for local youth. Audry Miller went on to the nationals at San Francisco during her junior year in high school. The Elks members tutored her for the speech contest.

Without the Community Center Building, the neighborhood's residents, young and old alike, would not have had a place to come together to meet one another and undertake worthwhile ven-



96: JUNIOR GRIFFIN AT SINCLAIR. HE WAS REPORTEDLY ONE OF QUINCY JONES' BEST FRIENDS AND POPULAR IN SPORTS. HE LIVED AT 5470 LATONA STREET. SOURCE: DIANNE P. ROBINSON, BLACK HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF KITSAP COUNTY.



CA 1946 PHOTOGRAPH OF THE STAGE PLAY "JIVING MACBETH" AS PERFORMED IN THE SINCLAIR PARK COMMUNITY CENTER BUILDING BY (FROM LEFT TO RIGHT) BOB STEWART (?) DIRECTOR, ALLEN (?), WILLIE B. WILLIAMS, AND ROBERT LINDELL. REPORTEDLY, THE PLAY WAS A SUCCESS. SOURCE: DIANNE P. ROBINSON, BLACK HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF KITSAP COUNTY.

tures that over the long-term contributed to the social fabric of both Sinclair Park and Bremerton. Many of these organizations and the bonds between individuals provided the foundation for later ventures and the continued growth of these organizations, such as the Elks and Carver Clubs and the N.A.A.C.P. following the war.³⁵

End of the War Activities

No fanfare or celebrations marked the end of Sinclair Park. Following the end of World War II families were told they had to move. The majority relocated to Qualheim. The Housing Authority chose the neighborhood and houses to which the families were to move, scattering them around the various housing projects.³⁶



IRENE WILLIAMS, JUNE 1946, GRADUATION DAY FROM BREMERTON HIGH SCHOOL. IRENE POSED IN SINCLAIR PARK NEXT TO THE ONLY PHONE BOOTH THERE. ACCORDING TO THE BREMERTON CITY DIRECTORY, RESIDENTS AT SINCLAIR PARK HAD ONLY ONE TELEPHONE. THERE WAS A TELEPHONE IN THE POST OFFICE WHERE MRS. WALKER WAS THE POSTMISTRESS. SOURCE: DIANNE P. ROBINSON, BLACK HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF KITSAP COUNTY.

Post-war plans consisted of several ideas for disposition of Sinclair Park. A 1947 report recommended that the land and Community Center Building be acquired by the City of Bremerton for development as a recreational area, small airfield, or use as a municipal club house. The subdivision of the area into smaller lots for these purposes, however, was viewed as disadvantageous to the potential of flooding the local housing market.

In the end, removal of demountable buildings began with the surplusing of 80 units on July 1, 1946. One-bedroom units sold at \$650 cash, two-bedroom at \$900 cash, and three-bedroom at \$1000 cash, with preference given to military personnel. Purchasers were responsible for complete building removal and capping of utilities. Many units were disassembled on site and hauled away in sections while others were transported intact on trucks or barges. Many of the sturdy, lightly used dwellings were simply floated to waterfront lots around the Kitsap Peninsula and used as summer cabins and beach houses. It was estimated that less than 10% of units sold by Bremerton Housing Authority remained within Kitsap County as they were scattered around the Puget Sound area or

scrapped for the windows and lumber.

The disposition orders for the communities were as follows:

1. Duration Dormitories (WA 45-046, 142, 306)
2. Sinclair Park (WA 45-112B)
3. Sheridan Park Addition (WA 45-210)
4. View Ridge (WA 45-216)
5. Anderson Cove (WA 45-111)
6. View Ridge (WA 45-144)
7. Qualheim (WA 45-112A)
8. Sheridan Park War Apartments (WA 45-145)
9. View Ridge (WA 45-141)³⁷

By 1948 the neighborhood had vanished leaving only the streets, sidewalks and the Community Center Building. A Quit Claim Deed in November of 1950 released claim of the site (approximately 183 acres) from the Public Housing Administration to the State of Washington for National Guard purposes only. Over the ensuing years, the Washington Military Department altered the building to meet their changing needs. In 1954, the adjacent Bremerton National Guard Armory (9,837 gross square foot) was constructed. The land was annexed to the City of Bremerton to provide municipal services. A public park facility was located immediately west of this property and used for day uses and athletic events. The City of Bremerton also erected a water tower on the site.



CA 1970s AERIAL VIEW OF SINCLAIR PARK, LOOKING SOUTH. SOURCE: WASHINGTON MILITARY DEPARTMENT.

Endnotes

¹ U. S. National Archives and Records Administration, Pacific Alaska Region Facilities, Seattle: Record Group No. 181, Naval Districts and Shore Establishment, 13th Naval District, Box No. 515054, Box No. 2 (folder 4 of 6): 323.

² *Ibid*: 324.

³ *Ibid*: 325.

⁴ *Ibid*: 326.

⁵ *Ibid*: 328.

⁶ Preliminary recommendations of the Bremerton Committee on Housing Facts and Goals, *1947: 1*)

⁷ U. S. National Archives and Records Administration, Pacific Alaska Region Facilities, Seattle: Record Group No. 181, Naval Districts and Shore Establishment, 13th Naval District, Box No. 515054, Box No. 2 (folder 4 of 6): 322.

⁸ *Ibid*: 339-340.

⁹ *Ibid*: 347-348.

¹⁰ *Ibid*: 359.

¹¹ *Ibid*: 378-379.

¹² *Ibid*: 367.

¹³ "Conference on Negro Naval Personnel, Thirteenth Naval District, Seattle WA." (31 March 1944). Transcript of report on. Parts 1-3: 1.

¹⁴ *1944 Conference on Negro Naval Personnel Pt1,-3: 9*

¹⁵ Greer, Marie. (2003). Oral history interview conducted by Dianne P. Robinson.

¹⁶ (*April 27, 1945 letter*)

¹⁹ (*Aug 11, 1944 letter to Housing Authority of the City of Bremerton from National Housing Agency*)

¹⁷ Greer, Marie. (2003). Oral history interview conducted by Dianne P. Robinson.

¹⁸ Peebles, Delse. (2003). Oral history interview conducted by Dianne P. Robinson.

²⁰ *Ibid*.

²¹ Greer, Marie. (2003). Oral history interview conducted by Dianne P. Robinson.

²² Berteaux, Mrs. Gladys Walker (2003). Oral history interview conducted by Dianne P. Robinson. Mrs. Berteaux was the first woman African American barber in Bremerton. She resided in Sinclair Park and finished barber school in 1949, later running a shop next to Danny Hoard's residence.

Miller, Audry. (2003). Oral history interview conducted by Dianne P. Robinson.

²³ Greer, Marie. (2003). Oral history interview conducted by Dianne P. Robinson.

²⁴ Spinola, Cornelius Jerome. (1954). "An Historical Study of the Bremerton, Washington Public Schools." Thesis, University of Washington: 113.

²⁵ Greer, Marie. (2003). Oral history interview conducted by Dianne P. Robinson.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ Miller, Audry. (2003). Oral history interview conducted by Dianne P. Robinson.

²⁸ Greer, Marie. (2003). Oral history interview conducted by Dianne P. Robinson.

²⁹ *Architectural Record*. (May 1946: 97-105) v. 99. "Community Buildings: Architectural Record's Building Types Study Number 113."

³⁰ Greer, Marie. (2003). Oral history interview conducted by Dianne P. Robinson.

³¹ Sturdivant, Mrs. Gloria (2003). Oral history interview conducted by Dianne P. Robinson. According to information from Mrs. Sturdivant and Paul de Barros, Quincy Jones attended Koontz Junior High in Bremerton. Barros reports that Edie Lewis, a local Bremerton barber, gave Quincy pointers on music and Joseph Powe, a local school music teacher who had a dance band, provided inspiration for writing music. Quincy reportedly baby sat for Joseph Powe. While babysitting, Quincy would read his Glenn Miller arranging books. Quincy was then about twelve to thirteen years of age. Quincy moved to Seattle just before the end of the school year in 1947. Barros, Paul de. (1993). *Jackson Street After Hours: The Roots of Jazz in Seattle*. Seattle: Sasquatch Books: 102.

³² Greer, Marie. (2003). Oral history interview conducted by Dianne P. Robinson.

³³ Peebles, Delse. (2003). Oral history interview conducted by Dianne P. Robinson.

³⁴ Greer, Marie. (2003). Oral history interview conducted by Dianne P. Robinson.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ "Preliminary Recommendations of the Bremerton Committee on Housing Facts and Goals for the Disposition of Public War Housing in the City of Bremerton, Washington." (April 17, 1947). Seattle: National Housing Agency: 12.