

The Woman's Club of Roland Park

By Mary Kay Battafarano

For over 100 years, women have had a special home at 4500 Roland Avenue in the stately Beaux-Arts clubhouse near Cold Spring Lane that is The Woman's Club of Roland Park. In 1896, on the cusp of the suffragette movement, 28 visionary women gathered together to foster cultural and intellectual pursuits as they began living in Plat 1 of Roland Park. Until the construction of the clubhouse in 1904, these women met in their homes and a community hall housed in the historic shopping center on Roland Avenue. The clubhouse land was donated by the Roland Park Company, as were several prominent corner lots on Roland Avenue reserved for community organizations. Fundraisers and two mortgages paid off during the 1950s with a party to celebrate the growth of the Club.

Both the Club and clubhouse have grown and adapted over the years to accommodate the changing needs of our members and society. Meetings are now weekly



Photo of the front of the clubhouse Photo courtesy Beth Hayes

and include two guest speakers with an optional catered lunch. During wartime, efforts to support the troops replaced regular programs and activities. The open front porch was enclosed to add a coatroom, lobby, and parlor. Later, a side addition along Ridgewood Road provided a dedicated office on the first floor and a library above. An original second-floor apartment was an income-producing venture. By 1951 when the apartment was no longer in use, a dining room was created in its place. The kitchen, first located in the basement, was moved to be adjacent to the new dining room, and an elevator, added in 1985, made the second floor more accessible.

As a member of the Club currently serving as President, I'm pleased to share news of more recent accomplishments. In 2017, the Club acquired 501(c)(3) nonprofit status that will help ensure our future financially and facilitate philanthropic outreach. We are proud of the many significant improvements to the property. Most notable to many who pass by our corner is the return of our second story ornamental balustrades, removed during roof repairs in the last decade. Our "antique" men's room has been converted into two private unisex restrooms to meet accessibility standards. Upgraded landscaping, most dramatically in the back where a garden in the tradition of renowned American landscape architect Beatrix Farrand, has been constructed based on a sketch made during a 1905 visit. The University of California at Berkley recently uncovered the sketch from the archives. University of Maryland faculty member Jack Sullivan, FASLA, along with his graduate students, adapted the drawing for 21st Century conditions. New hardscape includes terracing, crushed stone walkways, bluestone capped walls, downwardly directed soft lighting, an arborvitae hedge and Farrand's favorite shrubbery for structure and design: boxwoods, hollies, and yews. Planters will soon provide color by the newly restored fountain. A custom-made, black steel pergola, given by Gideon N. Stieff Jr. in memory of his mother, Claire von Marées Stieff, president of the

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Club in 1936, will stand on the new bluestone terrace.

As with all historic homes, our clubhouse requires loving care to keep it maintained and extra investment for updates to our equipment and interior. Annual giving and gifts this year have fortunately proved generous enough to facilitate many interior projects for the benefit of members and guests. Our facilities are available for rental on a limited basis when not in use by the Club. Since 2009, we've hosted the annual Roland Park Spring Celebration as our contribution to the community. Evening Programs are always open to the public at no cost.

More About the Landscape

In the spring of 2015, The Maryland House and Garden Pilgrimage agreed on selecting the clubhouse as hostess for the community of Roland Park's House and Garden Tour. They committed to sharing the ticket sales as a fundraiser for the restoration of the rear property. The Pilgrimage was interested in the historical connection to Beatrix Farrand, a noted landscape gardener and peer of the Olmsted Brothers. In 1905 Ms. Farrand was visiting Baltimore and created a sketch, recently secured from the archives at Berkeley through the aid of Therese O'Malley.



The ladies of the Clubhouse Foundation's Beatrix Farrand Garden Committee, including Sally Anthony, Carlisle Hashim, Kathy Hudson, Karen Offutt and Barbara Peters, researched Ms. Farrand's work for three years while raising additional funds. They reached out to Professor Jack Sullivan at the University of Maryland's Landscape Architecture Department for guidance on the project and worked tirelessly to make the redesign of the backyard a reality. They

also consulted with outside professionals, Catherine Mahon, Emily and Jim Fuchs, and Therese O'Malley.

New landscaping at the Club this spring also includes a new side shade garden along Ridgewood Road. The club's member-run Grounds Committee chaired by Cheryl Marrocco and including Karen Plowden were instrumental in the creation of the new shade garden.

Ultimately, these new gardens were built to become an asset to the neighborhood and a place of meditation and meeting for the club's members and friends. ❖



Meetings are held weekly and include two guest speakers and an optional catered lunch
Photo courtesy Beth Hayes

As our 2018-2019 fiscal year begins this June, a membership campaign is now underway. Initially, only residents of Roland Park were eligible, but we have since expanded to include women throughout the entire Baltimore area. Membership is by invitation, which means two existing members must sponsor each application.



Meetings are both educational and social
Photo courtesy Beth Hayes

Save the date and stop by our annual Open House and Activities Fair, Thursday, October 4, 2018, from 10 am-12 noon. To inquire further about membership or rentals, please visit our website at twcrp.org/contact. We hope to see you soon at the Club! ❖

About the Author: Mary Kay Battafarano is the 2018-2020 President for The Woman's Club of Roland Park, the first time in 25 years a Roland Park resident has been elected to this leadership position. She can be reached at marykay.b@icloud.com