

# HISTORY OF THE EDWARD STREET DAY CARE CENTER

Written for the Memoirs of Marian S. Paul

The year of 1883 found Worcester a city of 70,000, one fourth of this population were people born in countries other than the United States of America. There were no provisions in the city for preschool age children to attend any form of nursery school.

During this period churches rendered public service in the form of charities. The ideas and organizations called social service came at a later period. At the spot where Sherer's Department store is now, a group of women met in the Union Church [which stood on Front Street]. As part of their benevolent work they started a day nursery. In 1883, they rented the lower floor of a house on Southbridge Street, number 145.

This is the beginning of what is now Edward Street Day Care Center. In 1886, the organization was purely charitable and no fee was charged. They had a capacity of 25 and included the age group from one and a half to seven years.

Four years later the task had grown and the women of Union Church sought assistance. They invited women from other Protestant Churches to cooperate. Directors to represent eight participating churches were chosen. In 1887, Day Nursery Society was formed.

In 1889 several physicians in Worcester felt there was a need for a temporary home for children. This work was combined with the already functioning day care nursery. The building on Southbridge Street was purchased and the organization known as the Temporary Home and Day Nursery was born. Three years later the society was incorporated under Massachusetts law and the name again changed to Temporary Home and Day Nursery Society.

In 1909, after 26 years on Southbridge Street this location was no longer considered suitable. An extensive search followed for a new location. The Blaisdell Estate on Edward Street was selected. The Southbridge property was sold and the lot on Edward Street plus the adjoining parcel of land was purchased. The present building was erected and in May 1910 a new home was dedicated.

In 1949, the decreased patronage of the temporary home was discussed by the Executive Committee. They proposed that a survey be undertaken by the Executive Community Council. The request was granted and a study committee

was appointed by the council. Mrs. Francis Coe acted as the Executive Committee's representative and liaison worker.

In March 1951, Temporary Home Service was discontinued. The facilities were changed to a day nursery program. The name was changed to Edward Street Day Nursery Society in October 1951. In January 1956 the organization's name was again changed to Edward Street Day Care Center. This gives a more accurate description of the work of the agency.

The personnel of the original Edward Street Day Care Center constantly changed for ten years from 1884 to 1894. Charlotte Emerson came to Worcester in 1894. She was the first social worker in the city. Miss Emerson devoted thirty-three years of her life to the Nursery Society. In recognition of her long and faithful service soon after her death in 1928, the Board of Directors established The Charlotte Emerson Fund. The income of this fund is spent each year in supplying needs which are apparent to the present director. A tablet in her memory was placed in the former director's room.

The Director from 1927 to 1931 was Miss Susan Batchelder assisted by Miss Cora Sawyer. In 1931, Miss Sara B. Gaylord became superintendent and worked with the nursery for twenty-one years before retiring. In June 1952, Mrs. Marian S. Paul became the Executive Director.

At the time this history is being rewritten, February 1957, Mrs. Paul has resigned from the Edward Street Day Care Center. The Parents Club of the center wishes to pay a tribute to her untiring efforts to improve the center's program in order to give better service and understanding to each family as well as the community as a whole. The following pages are a written account of the many details of progress and policy changes. It is with a deep sense of appreciation and affection that the parents gather the details of the many improvements which have been made during the five years of Mrs. Paul's stay with us at number Ten Edward Street.

There are many physical changes in the building itself, but more important is the intangible attitude Mrs. Paul has created by her presence. As one of the parents so aptly phrased it, "why when Mrs. Paul came we started to use the front door and you know you are welcome." Another parent added, "I used to have trouble with my children not wanting to attend the center. Now they cry when Saturday comes and there is no center that day." Mrs. Paul's first impression of the center was "where are the children? I thought this was a place for children." Mrs. Paul rolled up her sleeves, worked hard and coped with many frustrations. She did not shirk any task. It is quite apparent in 1957 that both parents and children feel welcome and understood at the Edward Street Day Care Center.

In June 1952, when Mrs. Paul began her work with the center, the aims of the nursery changed. Her new aim was to make the nursery and agency which

would provide day care to young children that would meet the standards recommended not only by the State of Massachusetts, but by such agencies as the Child Welfare League of America and the United States Children's Bureau.

The second aim was to provide a service to help the parents meet their family problems and to teach about growth and development of children.

In order to meet these high standards, changes were needed in the teaching staff and in the building and grounds. Most important to improve service to the community, the nursery set down this philosophy: "We hope to improve the quality of our service through the improvement in the quality of our workers."

By the time Mrs. Paul was director for sixteen months, in October 1953, work had been started on the needed building changes. The wiring and lighting systems were improved. More modern and suitable plumbing was installed. Good health standards were in practice for admission to the center. An in-training program was started for the teachers to improve their understanding of the children and their families. Policies were altered to enable the center to work in closer harmony with physicians, psychiatrists, and other social agencies. These strides ahead meant that the center would be able to accept all cases where for the good of the child a need for admission was demonstrated, even though the mother was not employed outside the home.

Two years and four months under Mrs. Paul's directorship, service has been given to one hundred and eighty two children from one hundred and twenty two families in one year, October 1953 to September 1954. The staff included nine teachers well trained and qualified in the care of Nursery School age children. The possibility of including a program for school age children was proposed to the Worcester Community Council. The Parents Club became better organized in 1954. Officers were elected and their meetings became their own responsibility. The parents program included painting two basement playrooms and buying a new scale to replace a broken one. There were panel discussions in which parents, teachers, Mrs. Paul, and Mrs. Jones, of Family Service participated. A party at Christmas time as well as Italian, Swedish and Armenian Dinners were carried out entirely by the parents. Mrs. Paul instituted the practice of parent conferences to discuss children's problems and progress. Each year Mrs. Paul and the Board of Directors decided upon a particular aim.

For the 1955 the aim was "Day care is not understood in our own community, therefore our aim for the coming year can well be helping industry and the community to understand the need for and the value of good day care to the community."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Quotation from Dr. Martha Elliott, Chief of the Children's Bureau; United States Department of Health, Education and Welfare

The year October 1954 to September 1955 was the nursery's year to "spread their horizons." The staff began working with a psychiatrist and a psychiatric social worker from the Youth Guidance Center and the members of the staff began attending conferences of the Child Welfare League.

During this time the centers most successful community project was accomplished by working with the Community Council to form the Nursery Education Association in Worcester. The special aim during the year 1954 – 1955 was to raise the standards of nursery schools and day care centers in Worcester and to give parents a yardstick to measure them. Several agencies began at that time to use the nursery on Edward Street for their own educational purposes.

The turnover of children was not so great. The average active enrollment was seventy-four. There were nine miscellaneous reasons for families using the services of the center. Children came from all parts of Worcester, Shrewsbury, Millbury and Leicester.

The year's program of 1954 – 1955 marked the completion of two years of kindergarten training. Graduation exercises for those 5 year-old children completing kindergarten training were held in June 1955. "Diplomas" were presented by Mrs. Knight, Vice President of the Board of Directors.

The building had some face lifting. Stairs were refinished and new treads put on. The outside fence was painted and a new counter was put on the kitchen cupboards.

The Parents Club had an active year and fulfilled their three aims: to learn about children, to do something for the nursery and to have some fun. They had an auction sale and cleared \$200.00 with which they purchased asphalt tile for the Rice Room and the hall downstairs.

During 1955 the center broadened its horizons in many directions in order to give the best possible day care Worcester children.

In 1956 the nursery changed its name to The Edward Street Day Care Center. This name gives a more accurate description of the work of the agency. The aim during this year of 1956 was to improve the program and quality of service to the community. For the first time in four years the same people have been on the staff, as a result the children's program has benefited. Three of the teachers attended a course, "Emotional Development of Young Children", under the leadership of Mr. John F. Scott from the Youth Guidance Clinic. The entire staff attended weekly seminars in addition to some of the meetings of the National Association for Nursery Education.

The director and two board members attended the New England Regional Meeting of the Child Welfare League held in Boston. Attendance at this type of

meeting indicated the center worked along approved lines in the field of nursery education. Two board members and Mrs. Paul participated in the National Conference of the Childhood Education Association in Washington, DC. This gave them the opportunity to hear and talk with leaders in the field. Every contact along this line enlarged the scope of Edward Street Day Care Center's program. It enabled the center to give a better quality of service to the community.

The admission age was raised from two years to two years and six months. Over half of the enrollment attended the center for over one year.

The Parents Club planned a bake sale to raise money to purchase equipment for the center. They cleared \$75.00. This year it was decided to require at least two interviews with the director concerning the progress of the children. They must also attend at least four parent meetings.

The never-ending battle with repairs went on in 1956. The entire building was painted on the outside. The roof was repaired and the drains were checked. A new portion of fence was added to make the playground safer. The kitchen had a new fan installed, new awnings, new cabinets, a new mixer, and a new overhead light. The dining room walls were painted and a new border added. The second floor halls were painted and steps repaired. New black boards and bulletin board were put in the Kindergarten room. A new washing machine was purchased. In 1952, as Mrs. Paul toured the center and noticed the changes needed, one of the teachers accompanying her was impressed with the new director's ability and efficiency. As they passed by a sleepy little tot trying to eat, Mrs. Paul sat down and helped the little one. It was then that the teacher knew Mrs. Paul was the one the center had been needing. In 1956, new playground equipment was added. One item was a wading pool, which the children appreciated and enjoyed. Above all, the center is a place for children. Mrs. Paul has never forgotten the most important people in the center, "the children."

The center worked closely with Mrs. Barbara Jones and Mr. Walter Olson of the Family Service Organization during the year 1956. Mrs. Eugene Trainor of Friendly House permitted the children from Edward Street Center to use their dental clinic. The Board of Directors proved to be a very active and real working group; through this combined team work the center had a good year in 1956.

With Mrs. Marian S. Paul as director, the Edward Street Day Care Center has had five "GOOD" years. Thank you from the Parent's Club.

Presentation of "Memoirs" to Mrs. Marian S. Paul from the Parents Club  
Saturday February 9, 1957

Mrs. Paul, tonight – "this is your life" – this is your life as Executive Director of the Edward Street Day Care Center.

This is to be a joyous and festive occasion, and some efforts have been expended to make it so; however, the fact remains, that there is more than a sprinkling of sadness connected with the entire affair because you will soon be leaving us. It is likened to the story of the mother of twelve children who, through unfortunate circumstances lost one child and was being consoled by a neighbor who said, "so not feel too badly because you have eleven left" to which the distraught mother replied, "there is no room in a mother's heart to even spare one." Those of us gathered have come to think of the center as a home for one large family of which we are all a part and although the circumstances are not as drastic as the story, yet we find it difficult to spare you, Mrs. Paul.