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Guild's Lake Courts : an impermanent housing project

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ABSTRACT

An abstract of the dissertation of Tanya Lyn March for the Doctor of Philosophy in Urban Studies presented May 28, 2010

Title: Guild's Lake Courts: An Impermanent Housing Project

Guild's Lake Courts was built as temporary worker housing for the steel and shipyard industries during World War II. The massive housing development in Northwest Portland consisted of 2,432 units of housing, five community buildings, five childcare centers, a grade school and a fire station. Guild's Lake Courts was the eighth largest housing project built at that time in the United States. The peak population in January 1945 was approximately 10,000 individuals. Archival research, face-to-face oral histories, and resident reunions were used to explore the social, architectural and political history of Guild's Lake Courts. The lens for understanding how the community operated is dominantly for the social history that of a childhood homefront experience. Four wartime themes emerged in this study: 1) that Portland's focus on prejudice dimmed during the war years, 2) that the community was a confluence of humanity, 3) that the design of the site and the housing was shaped by a convergence of New Deal innovations in design construction technologies and electrification and 4) that there was a willingness to sacrifice creature comforts during the war years. Guild's Lake Courts as a residential community under went three rapid

evolutions prior to its demolition in 1951, a wartime housing operation 1942-1945, affordable housing 1945-1948, and a haven for Vanport Refugees June 1948-1950.

Guild's Lake Courts history has been overlooked but it offers insights into the possible fate of the residents of Vanport City had the community not been flooded in 1948.

The story of Guild's Lake Courts is a counterpoint story to Vanport City the largest of the three defense housing projects in Oregon that admitted African-Americans during the war years.

GUILD'S LAKE COURTS:
AN IMPERMANENT HOUSING PROJECT

by

TANYA LYN MARCH

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
in
URBAN STUDIES

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Portland State University
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CHAPTER 1:

INTRODUCTION

The songs of the working people have always been their sharpest statement, and the one statement that cannot be destroyed. You can burn books, buy newspapers, [demolish buildings] you can guard against handbills and pamphlets but, but you cannot prevent singing....

John Steinbeck, from preface to John Greenway's *American Folksongs of Protest*

One of the promising avenues for studying the history of working people is exploring the physical fabric of neighborhoods that they have left behind. This project focuses on the daily life experiences of homefront Americans in the 1940s through a case study of Guild's Lake Courts, a grouping of multi-family public housing buildings built in Portland, Oregon, during World War II. Because the research depended heavily on oral histories gathered in twenty-first century to supplement archival sources, the study emphasizes the experiences of children at Guild's Lake Courts. The character of neighborhoods where they lived and the factories and stores where their parents worked also became part of the narrative. Some of the most enthralling neighborhood histories arise from documenting the various community facilities: churches, schools, dance halls, beer gardens, and candy shops frequented by the ordinary adults and children. I wanted to learn from former residents just what they considered to be their community when they occupied the units as children.



Figure 1-1. (photo) Aerial image of Portland c. 1945. A portion of Guild's Lake Courts is in the lower left of the image. Photographer Leonard Delano. Courtesy of the City of Portland Archives.

I set out to study Guild's Lake Courts, a defense public housing development built in 1942, and hoped to make sense of its demolition and discover how this, the eighth largest housing project built prior to the first decades of public housing in the United States, had been almost utterly forgotten. The first phase presented in the dissertation focuses on the physical design and layout of the site and its eight sub-districts the story of the built environment in isolation from the design of structures, variations in the built form, construction and demolition processes. After establishing the study area within the urban form, I followed many threads using various lenses to explore the built environment and the resident community, but the social history, which permeates the text, is predominantly from the perspective of the childhood experiences of the residents. The second phase the "human experience of Guild's Lake

Courts” are two juxtaposing perspectives these are the two layers of human experience. The oral histories are drawn upon to explore the first level the residential experience which contrasts and is in the end in conflict with the second level as projected in HAP documents and pertains to the bureaucratic experience of the HAP board members from locating sites for and construct housing, to setting policies to facilitate operates and to eventually dissolve the defense housing program. William M. Tuttle Jr.’s work on the lives of America’s children is dominated by the experience of children who, like Tuttle, lived without their fathers during their time of service in World War II. Unlike the children Tuttle encountered, the adults who shared their childhood stories with me had lived with their fathers, who lived in public housing while working in defense industries. Those still living and willing to share their memories were mostly children uprooted from across the United States and relocated to Portland, Oregon. What permeates the four themes about to be introduced is a child’s view of a housing project that for a decade existed in close proximity to downtown (see Figure 1-1). The last phase emphasizes while drawing upon the various layers of history and perspectives the negative impact on the residents resulting from economic development politics and racial politics that fail to account for the cost of human suffering experienced by the families that had been flooded of Vanport and only temporary re-housed in Guild’s Lake Courts. This study is thus in some ways as much about a single housing project as it is about childhood during the 1940s and coming of age on the homefront of World War II.

A useful way to approach neighborhood history is to focus on periods of change as these places evolve as a result of public policies or ethnic transition. For the residents of Guild's Lake Courts there were two main transition points: the end of World War II in 1945, and the flooding of Vanport City,¹ Portland's other large housing project, in May 1948. This dissertation is rooted in the architecture, planning, and social history of Guild's Lake Courts, the fourteenth largest federal housing complex ever built, and follows the three distinct stages during its short life from 1942 to 1951: wartime community, postwar community, and post-flood community.

Vanport, the largest housing project ever built in the United States, was opened in 1943 and at full capacity housed more than 40,000 people (four times the population of Guild's Lake Courts on only twice the acreage). The scholarly reputation of Vanport ranges from its being remembered as a hastily built miracle city to a darker image of this segregated community being identified as an isolated ghetto. The focus of every study of Vanport has been on its catastrophic destruction. For the Guild's Lake Courts study, however, when I looked at the archival resources and talked to elders for this project, I stayed focused on discrete periods of time as if I were unaware of the demise of Guild's Lake Courts by 1951. When I read a newspaper from 1944, I read it from the perspective of that point in time, not with a judgment on how the policy in action played out. I wanted individuals to share their stories without regret for what happened to the homes; I wanted to learn what it was like to live in one of the massive instant communities born out of the necessity of World War II.

There is much to learn about a community by examining its anchors, such as the use of the municipal pool, over time or the shift from bars to soda fountains. Guild's Lake Courts was a sizable community to study; what made it tricky for my chosen methodology was that the site had been cleared in 1951. It was also daunting at times to study a housing project that had multiple anchors, many of which, like the five community centers at Guild's Lake Courts, were difficult to distinguish in the photographs available. Many of the pictures of the community that came to light include children but like both of the figures in this chapter, the identity of those caught by the camera's lens is undetermined since they were not the subjects of the picture. The best images of children are family photographs and class pictures that are only accessible in family scrapbooks and collections shared with me during interviews. One would think that buildings would be as lasting as songs, but they are not, hence my addition to the Steinbeck quote in brackets. The song I was left to find was in the words of former residents as they described the lost neighborhood of their childhood.



Figure 1-2. (photo) Images such as this would never have been attributed to Guild's Lake Courts had it not been for the help of residents and ephemera collectors who offered to assist in this study and with the Guild's Lake Courts reunions.

Photographer Leonard Delano. Courtesy of Norman Gholston.

Research Approach, and Assumptions

My first exposure to gathering oral history was when I worked on a project to record the history of the Anna Head School, focusing on the original site in Berkeley, California, and the lives of former students who had attended the once all-girls boarding school. While consulting as an architectural historian for the Place Matters Project, I was exposed to an oral history methodology where the experiences of multiple individuals were gathered with the focus on place rather than personal history. My interest has for many years been public housing and Guild's Lake Courts was an enigma. As a historic preservationist and architectural historian in New York City, I focused on existing PWA-era public housing buildings. Using oral histories to flesh out fact from fiction was always one of my tools to study communities and the built environment.

To interviews for various projects I have brought an unassuming tape recorder and a three-ring binder containing copies of photographs, newspaper clippings, maps, and blueprints to unveil how individuals adapted designs that made neighborhoods thrive, evolve, and decline. The materials brought to stimulate memories and a sharing climate could potentially be distracting to the interviews; the timing of using the historic images (many of which appear in this document) is extremely sensitive. The usefulness of images of the built environment to trigger memory fluctuates depending on the individual. They often had their own versions of my binder and a period of time would be spent relishing each other's collections. If someone was shy, the materials were a great way to start the conversation; for verbose individuals, it was better to wait

until there was point of pause where an image might just draw out a more enriched narrative.

The PWA housing program never reached the West Coast, yet by 1942 the Housing Authority of Portland (HAP) was operating the largest housing authority in the country at the time. Driven by my own curiosity about public housing history and a desire to explore how the utter erasure of the most massive program built by a single housing authority in the 1940s transpired, I focused on a single development that had been forgotten even locally. Today in Portland these wartime developments no longer exist on the city's landscape. The Steinbeck quote left out that the buildings of the working people could be demolished and that is just what transpired in Portland.

Stories of living in Vanport are dynamic. Yet, the narratives preserved by interviews of former Vanport residents, which I have encountered at Oregon Historical Society and Portland State University, have been rehearsed and rehashed to such a degree in their repetitive telling by the narrators that the line between reality and myth blurs. In one series of interviews held at Portland Community College, the interviewer appeared to have an underlying agenda that permeated the interviews and created, with the use of leading and limited questions, an uncomfortable atmosphere. Almost all the interviews of Vanport residents used the flood calamity as a focal point the exception being a set of interviews focused on the experience of women in the 1940s defense workforce collected by Karen Beck for the bicentennial in 1976 and the *Northwest Women's History Project* in 1981.

Guild's Lake Courts was less affected by the flood of May 1948 and had the potential to shed new light on what was like to live in wartime housing in the 1940s. Guild's Lake Courts was selected from the eighteen 1940s Housing Authority of Portland development primarily because it was large enough to have enough former residents remaining locally to interview, not because it was one of the segregated developments. Columbia Villa was still standing when I started my research but I felt its impending demolition would cloud any effort to learn that community's 1940s history. In addition, since there were no African Americans in the units in the 1940s it would not have allowed for a true study of race relations on the homefront. Chet Orloff's students in a Portland State University capstone class conducted an oral history project as part of a 106 Review mediation process for Columbia Villa and invited me to talk with them about public housing history. I was trained in 106 Review practices and historic documentation at Columbia in the master's program of Historic Preservation; I thought that I could modify that process and Orloff's questionnaire and apply the methodology to a study of a temporary defense project. I understood early on in my research that these were the only three HAP-managed housing developments that admitted African American families in the 1940s.

The project evolved into a primary research question with two related challenges. The main research question was "What was it like to live in wartime housing project?" using Guild's Lake Courts as a case study, particularly what was it like to grow up there. The first related challenge was to document and examine the history of Guild's Lake Courts as a physical place. Architect Morris Whitehouse

became the primary focus of the design history because the information on the identities of the other architects was missing for the first years of this research.

The second related challenge—the history of race and racial relations at Guild’s Lake Courts—initially seemed relatively transparent. This was perhaps because of my own acceptance that the history of public housing and the history of race in housing are virtually inseparable. My interview questionnaire, the literature on Portland history, and my archival research always tackled the issue of race and discrimination head on. Looking directly at this issue possibly misled me to think that the issue of housing discrimination had not been hidden to other researchers because I assumed that they failed to ask. Guild’s Lake Courts was forgotten and race was treated as some sort of conspiracy because Portland’s image was resistant to tarnish. Portland is branded as a progressive city; racial intolerance does not mesh with that accepted understanding of the city’s culture and since there are so few minorities within the city in contrast to most urban areas in the United States, there are fewer opportunities to observe intolerance that could challenge the false conception of progressiveness in this context of civil rights. Institutional memory erased discrimination history or glazed over this history as too risky to the status quo. At some point I got so focused on just how many African Americans lived there (the sources ranged from zero to 5,000 and I finally estimated 2,000) that I lost the perspective that it was very odd that so little information on African Americans outside of Vanport was accessible.

The effort to tell the story of life at a public housing project emerged through the lens of childhood. The people with whom I came into contact who had lived in Guild's Lake Courts had, for the most part, lived there as children. I had asked about race, I had observed the former residents mingle at public gatherings, and it did not occur to me that the integration of preschool, grade school, and recreation centers might not reflect the experience of the teen canteen. Just as I had not realized that dating age might change relationships I had also not realized that in two periods in the short operation of the development, African American children were bused to Linnton (which would at that time have been outside the Portland Public School district), limiting the amount of school integration of Guild's Lake Courts residents. It is quite likely that as these individuals had reached sexual maturity and had the development continued to operate, there might have been new racial tensions; I have no evidence to sway me but it was common in the Jim Crow South for children to intermingle in their youth only to be discouraged as they approached dating age. This question I leave open for further scholarship.

Guild's Lake Courts

Guild's Lake Courts is one of hundreds of temporary communities built during WWII; this development in Northwest Portland housed 10,000 residents at its population peak in 1944. Regionally, the Portland-Vancouver metropolis saw more public housing units built in 1942 than has ever been attempted since. The entire purpose of these communities was an emergency effort to provide temporary housing

for homeless families arriving in droves for lucrative defense employment. Yet despite the massive output of wartime housing, Portland is not one of the cities in the United States known by city planners for large-scale public housing developments. American cities typically identified with extensive public housing are New York City, Chicago, Detroit, and St. Louis. Yet it was the Housing Authority of Portland in 1942 that constructed and operated the largest public housing portfolio in the nation: 18,504 units of housing for approximately 72,000 people; that same year the New York City Housing Authority, the second largest housing authority in the nation and with a longer history, only operated 13,173 units. The regional impact of the defense housing is even more impressive because the fourth largest housing authority in 1942 was in Vancouver, Washington, with 12,389 units.

The first housing units at Guild's Lake Courts were occupied in October 1942 and the remaining vast expanse of housing built on the site of the Lewis & Clark Fair of 1905 was occupied soon after. These first units were electrified, detached single-family units designed by the prominent local architect Morris Whitehouse and were distinctive and innovative modern homes. But by 1943 the development had expanded to the area once occupied by marshy Kittredge Lake and the new row houses were indistinguishable from those cropping up in defense housing communities across the western United States.

The last architecturally indistinguishable division of Guild's Lake Courts was reserved for black tenants, and was the least electrified. The electrification was very appealing to families who were being enticed to move across the country—particularly

white rural families migrating from farms in northern states, where in the 1930s only thirteen percent of farms were electrified. By 1945 only 33 percent of farms were electrified despite the efforts of the New Deal to electrify the hinterlands. In Portland 99 percent of households were electrified by 1940, with a high rate of mechanical refrigeration (53 percent of households) and nearly the entire population using electricity to light their homes (99.2 percent).² Interestingly, African Americans were not recruited by the same techniques that had been used to recruit white workers. By the time construction started on the units dedicated to African American residents, it was clear that all the electricity that could be spared to operate mechanical refrigerators, hot plates, and electric heaters was going to be absorbed by the round-the-clock operations of the war industries, so homes offered in the black section of Guild's Lake Courts lacked these amenities and were rudimentary in contrast to Portland's existing housing stock.

Portland did not create a housing authority until the United States entered World War II in 1941, shortly after the attack on Pearl Harbor. This timeframe, in which Guild's Lake Courts operated as Defense-era housing, was relatively short in a national perspective. Guild's Lake Courts was created to provide housing for workers in the defense industry from steel fabrication to shipyards, yet it promised prospective residents more than a place to live. Residents were enticed with promises of furnished units in modern electrified structure with hard-to-obtain appliances, public schools, extensive childcare opportunities, and short commutes.

I disagree that the federal defense housing program might have failed to maintain a stable workforce in Portland had it not been for innovative thinkers like Henry J. Kaiser, which is the image that comes across after reading secondary sources on Vanport. Henry J. Kaiser's agent working to develop public housing for the Portland-Vancouver Metropolitan region was his son, Edgar Kaiser. The story line is that Edgar Kaiser realized very quickly that the power brokers in Portland were stalling on the creation of large defense housing projects, so he avoided the bureaucracy of Portland by working directly with the federal government to build Vanport. This version of events marginalizes the City of Portland's efforts to build large developments like Guild's Lake Courts and University Park. Kaiser attracted workers to the Portland and Vancouver shipyards by creating a full-service community that provided for families' educational and extracurricular needs and was located outside of Portland's city limits. But Kaiser was not the only defense contractor in the city; in fact dozens of industries in Portland qualified the families of their workers to live in federal public housing developments.



Figure 1-3. (photo) These trailers for Vanport Flood evacuees are on what was the softball field, located behind the 35th Avenue Recreation Center in the old Manila-Burma Streets section of the project. The defense housing units in the background are the Tunis and Guam Court extension west of 35th Avenue. The car in the far right of the picture is in the approximate location of the former project rental office parking lot next to the 35th Avenue Recreation Center. That section was constructed in 1943 and leveled in 1945–1946 to make room for industrial expansion. *The Oregonian* photographer Allan deLay took this image on June 15, 1948. Courtesy of Thomas Robinson.

These environments were designed to increase morale within planned, discrete communities, buoying the productivity of the defense industry workforce and avoiding conflicts between migrants and the pre-existing workforce over limited resources. The preconception that two-income families were among the first phase of occupants to inhabit dwellings at Guild's Lake Courts was not confirmed in the interviews conducted for this research. Many mothers were frustrated by the work conditions offered and opted to be homemakers. The need to provide for children lagged a bit behind dwelling construction but soon became the thrust of housing directors for promoting the welfare and stability of residents.



Figure 1-4. (photo) Activists and residents caravanning to Salem in 1948 to criticize the conditions for Vanport refugees in the trailers. Photographer Allan deLay. Courtesy of Thomas Robinson.

In March 1954, less than a decade after D-day, HAP was managing only 1,003 units of housing from a housing portfolio that had once included 18,504 units. All of the Guild's Lake Courts units had been liquidated. The project population had dropped from a peak of 10,000 in 1945–1946 but a surge in population had occurred briefly in 1948 when Vanport evacuees left homeless by the floodwaters from the Columbia River were moved to the only other housing project with an African American population. Some moved into dilapidated surplus trailers that protestors in the images called “kennels with wheels” (see figures 1-3 and 1-4). The last residents moved out of Guild's Lake Courts in 1951. The entire site of 300-plus acres was rapidly rebuilt with industrial and warehouse buildings. This research explores this story—from the

construction to the demolition of Guild's Lake Courts—but the focus is on daily life in a typical newly constructed public housing project in the 1940s.

Key Findings

The Guild's Lake Courts housing experience has relevance beyond the Portland-Vancouver region because the development is representative of Defense-era housing and, as an in-depth case study, contributes to understanding the homefront experience in 1940s American society. The “community of helping hands” was not unique to Guild's Lake Courts or even to defense housing communities; older children nationally took on active roles in helping fill the void created as men enlisted in the military and as men and women on the homefront shifted away from traditional jobs to work in defense industries. The Guild's Lake Courts, when first tenanted, included a mixture of working-class residents and middle-class residents; within this population mix were families of various faiths, regional roots, and racial backgrounds, all united by solidarity that a family member was employed in wartime production.

Guild's Lake Courts, as a site-specific study, offers a new dimension to William Tuttle's influential book on wartime childhood. Race was glossed over by Tuttle's respondents because the source materials were letters and there was no way to know the racial backgrounds of the participants unless they were forthcoming. The focus on childhood by Tuttle hinged on reflecting on how families functioned when the father was absent from the home for an extended period of time with uncertainty of his return; there was no effort to tease out the unique experience of the homefront

childhood experience where a father or stepfather was present in the home, as was the case during the war years in defense housing.

The African American experience in the Guild's Lake Courts story ensued near the end of the homefront experience; African Americans families were the last of the initial housing residents to arrive and they were all regulated to live in the far corner of the project. Advances were made in educational, recreational and employment opportunities by relocating from the South, but discrimination in local stores, businesses, and housing markets remained. In the postwar phase, the efforts to organize the residents deteriorated as the African American community experienced a period of continuous, deliberate, and aggressive displacement; the relocation process severed nascent social bonds, so that kinship but not neighborhood bonds survived.

So insidious was this exodus that Guild's Lake Courts was not only physically erased, it largely disappeared from the narrative of African American Portland. Even the Jones case, which was had more coverage in the local black press in 1946 than the Vanport Flood in 1948, has been decoupled from the history of Guild's Lake Courts. It is left as an awkwardly dangling footnote to the Vanport discrimination narrative. In some cities, privatization of Defense-era public housing enabled African Americans homeownership opportunities, as in Bayview-Hunters Point, in San Francisco. However, any chance to remain in the Guild's Lake District and create a coalescent community was unimaginable in Portland, the Jim Crow city of the west. The privatized public housing failed to fulfill the American Dream for decades as urban

renewal programs and freeways cut off these beacons of hope for sustainable minority homeownership.

Guild's Lake Courts architecturally demonstrates the transition to a postwar suburban housing style. This proto-suburban form is particularly evident in the "electric units" but is not unique to Guild's Lake Courts; similarities to exist in many other contemporary defense housing units, including, but not limited to, Columbia Villa (Portland, OR), Marin City (Marin, CA), Hunter's Point (San Francisco, CA), Dana Strand Village (Los Angeles, CA), Clason Point Gardens (Bronx, NY), Audubon Park (Audubon, N.J.) and Pennypack Woods (Philadelphia, PA). Most defense housing units classified as permanent housing by the federal government and built between 1941 and 1943 have elements in site planning that designers of the American residential suburbs referenced in their 1950s designs. Guild's Lake Courts was on par with permanent defense housing units in quality of design and construction; it was the fact that the land was only leased that prevented the federal government from succeeding in classifying the development as permanent.

During the postwar phase, community unity developed in the defense housing years was challenged. Guild's Lake Courts deviated briefly from this fading of unity when the community came together to assist devastated Vanport families. The bureaucracy complicated the federal disposition process. Removal of units from leased land issues was curtailed briefly but not halted by the Vanport Flood. This reinvigoration of camaraderie alarmed the HAP board and they responded by accelerating the dismantling process begun in 1946. The Portland establishment

always viewed Guild's Lake Courts as temporary, given that land upon which the majority of HAP's 1940s portfolio existed was low-lying land adjacent to bodies of water, intended for postwar industrialization and not suitable for long-term residential usage. There were reasons that large swaths of land in Portland had remained vacant; these sites were selected for residential communities out of a desire for expedience, not safety, a fact exemplified by the flooding of Vanport. Guild's Lake Courts too had experienced flooding in its short history but not catastrophic flooding.

Dismantling of the units began in 1946; HAP had rejected federal funds to purchase land at the site that could have saved the primer units at the development for use as long-term permanent public housing; they even could have privatized after the veterans' housing crisis had subsided. The complex erasure of Guild's Lake Courts is in part because of the compelling nature of the Vanport story. Because of its scale and shocking destruction, it has become THE story of public housing, marginalizing and eradicating the story of Guild's Lake Courts over time. The landscape at the former Vanport site is undeveloped hallowed ground; the landscape at the former Guild's Lake Courts site is a collage of industrial uses. The images of the Lewis and Clark Exposition of 1905 are the only recollection that remains of the past usage of the industrial district. Guild's Lake Courts is not part of the sense of place; it is a neglected historic orphan.

¹ Vanport was often called Vanport City but it was not an incorporated city.

² David Nye, *Electrifying America: Social Meanings of a New Technology, 1880–1940* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1990), 301; and Federal Census for Portland 1930 and 1940.

CHAPTER 2:

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The literature used to frame the examination of Guild's Lake Courts is drawn from the written word in the fields of urban housing policy, black studies, and history. The scholarship falls into four broad areas: 1) themes and theories related to low-income and public housing generally in the United States, 2) key scholars who have written on public defense housing, 3) sources used to clarify and contextualize the oral histories collected from former defense housing residents, and 4) race relations and segregation practices in housing and labor markets in Portland relevant to the stakeholders at the Guild's Lake Courts housing project. The first section is a broad exploration of three housing theories: socialism, filtering and second ghetto. As they are understood currently, the first two theories drove federal housing policy in the 1940s and the third is a consequence of federal practices in the 1940s. The second section pertains exclusively to a review of scholarly literature available on defense era housing as a distinct program within the development of federal public housing nationally. There has been limited examination of public housing built in the 1940s, because so little of the housing survived the period. Section three first addresses two works that have similar methodologies and cover daily life during the same period of study. The breadth of topics covered are the wartime experiences of children on the homefront of the United States, City of Portland general history, and the African

American experience in Portland leading up to the war and ending prior to the 1960s civil rights period. The fourth broad area narrows in on the 1940s in Portland. As there are no known existing scholarly studies of Guild's Lake Courts, this section draws on non-scholarly works on agencies that were active in Guild's Lake Courts, followed by some key literature on the African American experience in the housing and labor markets in the South and the Northwest prior to World War II and how these experiences were transmitted to the new housing communities in 1940s Portland. Although Guild's Lake Courts is not dealt with in these sources, there are themes presented which pertain to the social history of the Guild's Lake Courts residents.

It is unfortunate that some of the available information about Guild's Lake Courts contains erroneous details that create a murky historic record. For example, a 2006 article in the *Oregon Historical Quarterly* includes the following passage:

Guild's Lake Courts was the second largest wartime housing center in Portland, with more than ten thousand residents (Vanport was the largest). The Guild's Lake development was built on landfill between St. Helens Road and the Willamette River. Between May 1942 and December 1943, over 2,200 four-duplex row houses were built for both black and white shipyard workers and their families. In 1848, a dike holding back the Columbia River broke, completely destroying Vanport; over 18,000 people were left homeless. Temporary accommodations were constructed at Guild's Lake and other project sites to provide much-needed housing. Previous segregation laws in Portland left many African American families no option but to take up residence in the temporary barracks and trailers that constituted the housing projects at Guild's Lake.¹

The authors were four Portland State University students working on a senior capstone project. The errors are numerous throughout but this is the section of greatest concern, since misinformation is worse than a void:

- 1) "second largest wartime housing center in Portland"

Guild's Lake Courts was the largest wartime housing development in Portland. Vanport was the city in between Vancouver (Van) and (port) Portland. Vanport was not in Portland's city limits.

2) "over 2,200 four-duplex row houses"

The number of units did fluctuate during the years of operation, the number of units ranges from 2,248-2,606 units in various sources, according to the as-built maps there were 2,426 units in 1944. There is no such structure as a "four-duplex"; the project had single family attached units, duplex units, and four-plex units.

3) "were built for both black and white shipyard workers"

Guild's Lake Courts was not built to house Kaiser's shipyard workers. This housing development was built to house workers of steel industries in the Guild's Lake District.

4) "In 1848, a dike holding back the Columbia River broke"

The flood of Vanport happened in May 1948, and what broke was a railroad embankment that was serving an unintended use as a dam for a residential community.

5) "Previous segregation laws in Portland left many African American families no option"

Guild's Lake Courts was segregated until 1948, when evacuees white and African American moved into the previously white section of Guild's Lake Courts. The flood forced integration at the development in Northwest Portland. There was still a housing shortage in Portland, which is why white veterans had moved into HAP housing after the war. Segregation and exclusion of African Americans from homeownership was promoted by the real estate and banking industries; it was not the law when the war workers arrived. The use of the terms *black* and *African American* within the same paragraph is also creative.

6) "temporary barracks and trailers"

If anything, the row houses and electric units at Guild's Lake Courts were of superior construction quality to the housing at Vanport. There were no barracks placed on site and the 400-500 trailers brought in to house flood evacuees replaced dwelling units that had been shipped across the state to house veterans.

The easily accessed website <http://www.history.pdx.edu/guildslake>, also created out of the Portland State University class, has its own factual issues; one is the statement that

there were three recreation centers rather than the official five that were apparent. Another is the statement that “there was so much trouble and vandalism in the area,” which makes the community residents sound like a pack of ruffians living in a blighted community. As the internet becomes the main source of history for the emerging generation of scholars, a course intended to allow undergraduate students an opportunity to showcase their skills ends up being the established narrative of Guild’s Lake Courts.

Themes and Theories in Government Housing Development

This section focuses on three scholarly theories that are relevant to understanding federal housing policies in the 1940s. The federal government in the 1940s desired to create housing for the growing pool of defense industry workers in order to promote the war effort, yet it lacked the will to envision a progressive housing program or to socialize the housing by creating permanent structures. Scholars see a conflict between efforts to improve the well-being of the underserved and lingering unwillingness to carry on the reform housing agenda of the 1930s. Federal policy was guided by a desire to avoid the taint of socialism, and the notion that the federal government should not be in direct competition with the private market became entrenched. This agenda eclipsed the reformist agenda, entailing a near apathy towards quality in the construction and appearance of war housing.

The result was public housing policies evolving away from innovative leadership in housing and community design into the creation and operation only of housing that the private market could not provide. The rush to produce housing to aid

the war effort was shortsighted and purposefully devoid of efforts to encourage innovative design and adaptability to postwar housing needs. The housing units built during the war by the federal government, regardless of their formal classification as permanent or temporary, were untenable because of this aversion to plan for permanent public housing program. Federal policies regarding race in public housing facilitated the exclusionary practices in the private housing market. Homeownership is a source of individual wealth and social mobility. Most African Americans who were tenants of early public housing units become trapped within the public housing complexes, unable to acquire federal loans, and entire generations were unable to become homeowners.

Public Housing Linked to Socialism

Many constituents and politicians feared the so-called “Communist agenda,” which they perceived as being implicit within the New Deal policies of the Roosevelt administration. The public housing programs operated by the Public Works Administration (PWA) were considered part of that agenda and would remain a target of those capitalists invested in the private real estate market long after Roosevelt. To the contrary, for the Marxists, the housing crisis was a secondary evil.² A few, such as David Harvey, Stephen Barter and John Galbraith, write about the issue and frame it within the affordable housing literature. Engels stipulated in *The Housing Question* that the housing reform movement was counterproductive and that communists should remain focused on the abolition of the industrial labor system rather than the creation

of model housing or bandage repairs of the housing stock.³ In the 1930s private developers declared that advocates of subsidization were ignorant of the realities of capitalism and unwarranted in their criticisms. Thomas S. Holden, president of the New York Building Congress, who represented the views of many building owners, stated at a public address, “Private enterprise never had the responsibility of providing goods for people who could not pay, whether it is engaged in producing houses or groceries.”⁴ However, the perceived connection between federally funded public housing programs and the taint of socialism was a hurdle for all construction projects.

Historian Gail Radford argues against the notion that public housing with its apartment-style living “failed because Americans would never embrace alternatives to the ideal of single-family homeownership.”⁵ She attributes the main cause of the Public Works Administration (PWA) housing program’s decline to the fact that it was not well known, despite its initial success and early tenant satisfaction. She stipulates that by the time public housing emerged from obscurity in the 1960s, it was no longer a program to be proud of. Public housing coasted along during the 1950s with limited and unsuccessful efforts at returning to the ideals of progressive modernism. The inability of the housing authorities to maintain construction quality in newer PWA structures was compounded in the 1970s, as both old and new developments gained a notoriously negative reputation through media images of crime-ridden, bleak structures filled with minorities.⁶

This study of Guild’s Lake Courts attempts to examine defense housing in the era of World War II independently of the negative preconception the term imparts

from the current contemporary public housing image. In a sense, the defense program was designed to fail after the war. The program aimed to meet only the short-term need of government participation in the housing market and to assure private developers that the federal housing program would not outlast the current emergency. By setting aside the expertise of the housing reformers, the new private market policy drive in public housing of the 1940s tried to assure that temporary housing would remain temporary. Their intention was to avoid government competition in a postwar housing market with architecture predetermined to fail. Harold Ickes, Secretary of the Interior from 1933 to 1946 and head of the PWA from 1933 to 1941, attributed the failure of defense housing projects to evolve into permanent federal housing to a lack of appropriate locations.⁷ Since planning experts and the federal mortgage system decried mixed land uses, the dearth of residentially zoned land became an issue—one that played a critical and incendiary role in Portland when the federal government sited two of the largest federal housing projects there.

Housing becomes increasingly co-modified as its production is increasingly distanced from the individualism of the designer and the personality of the consumer by using standardized production techniques and materials. Prefabrication produces cost savings and encourages uniformity of housing types. The period of federal involvement in the production of defense housing produced a significant increase in this commodification, along with technological advances in construction processes and structural materials. The housing unit became like a widget that was mass-produced by a factory assembly line. As a commodity, housing is unusual in that its

value typically increases with age.⁸ Can the same be said of the temporary structures built during World War II?

Public Housing Linked to the Ghetto

Scholars agree that public housing was a powerful force in the segregation of African Americans in the United States. Journalist Blain Harden of *The Washington Post* in 2000 labeled public housing as “human filing cabinets.”⁹ Historian Kenneth Jackson frames how public housing became that way:

The result, if not the intent, of the public housing program of the United States was to segregate the races, to concentrate the disadvantaged in inner cities, and to reinforce the image of suburbia as a place of refuge for the problems of race, crime and poverty.¹⁰

Labor market discrimination and lingering restrictive racial covenants also contributed to the high percentage of minority populations within public housing developments.

The term “second ghetto” was coined twenty years ago by Arnold R. Hirsch in his book, *Making the Second Ghetto: Race and Housing in Chicago, 1940–1960*. The “first ghettos,” in the period 1910–1940, were hyper-segregated private neighborhoods or occasionally isolated enclaves within inner cities where African Americans were clustered. The second ghettos, post-World War II, are “quantitative, temporal, and qualitative,” the result of government-sanctioned and -supported programs for urban renewal that amounted to little more than slum clearance within the public housing program.¹¹ The notion that second ghettos predate this framework is articulated in the work of Timothy Gilfoyle, Amanda Seligman and Thomas Sugrue, who describe

PWA developments that followed the second-ghetto pattern during the New Deal.

Hirsch's case study was Chicago where wartime government building programs were not particularly large¹² and African American migration from the South stagnated until after the war, reducing the need for the new public housing units.

Hirsch's theoretical understanding of the marginalization of African Americans in the private housing market works for understanding ghetto creation in Portland when the framework of second ghetto is based on the definition of the federal involvement, not on the chronological order of ghetto formation, as Portland never had a Hirsch first ghetto. As described in his article "'Containment' on the Homefront: Race and Federal Housing Policy from the New Deal to the Cold War," racially equitable opportunities within public housing too easily became segregated opportunities in which racially mixed communities became the exception and not the norm in communities like Portland. Racially flexible areas became areas of racial exclusion; efforts to promote integration were branded as acts of communists.¹³

In one case study of Miami, Raymond A. Mohl noted that the timing of the formation of the second ghetto was distinct, because of the waves of Cubans migrating to that city and the earlier construction of public housing units under the New Deal.¹⁴ It is possible that the second ghetto could have been created in Portland as early as 1942—the irony being that Portland never had much of a first ghetto, lacking a truly hyper-segregated neighborhood or isolated inner-city enclave of African Americans. Portland's housing market reacted quickly to the rapid jump in its African American population between 1943 and 1945; what emerged in the private housing market was

not only *de facto* (by custom) residential segregation caused by the natural workings of the market, but, in fact, *de jure* (by law or state action) segregation resulting from the local government's complicity and support of segregationist policies and programs.¹⁵ Quintard Taylor states in his study of 1940s "Afro-American" migration to Seattle and Portland that the native Portlanders resented all newcomers and that Portland was more hostile to African Americans migrants than Seattle.¹⁶

Arnold Hirsch did not account in his narrative for the role of African Americans themselves in the creation of the second ghetto. Seligman argues that limiting the timeframe of the second ghetto from 1933 to 1968 fails to account for the continuing discriminatory housing practices that affected the majority of urban African Americans. She challenges not only the date parameters for Hirsch's analysis of Chicago, but also the limitation of focusing on only 10% of America's African American population within that timeframe. The blame for the creation of the second ghetto should not, she argues, rest solely on the federal government. The role of private markets is too easily obscured, and this private ghetto exists "alongside the second, public one."¹⁷

Stuart McElderry's 2001 article in the *Pacific Northwest Quarterly*, "Building a West Coast Ghetto: African-American Housing in Portland, 1910–1960," discusses how the ghetto took shape in Portland in the Williams Avenue area and would have benefited from a national perspective on ghetto formation scholarship. Without an understanding of Hirsch's theory, the article lacks a strong theoretical framework and only sees Guild's Lake Courts as a location that temporarily "alleviated some of the

overcrowding in the Williams Avenue area and helped stabilize Portland's black labor force."¹⁸ A perspective that reasonably only touches on how the formation of the African American ghetto was delayed during the war years by the existence of public housing units that were segregated and allowed for a blueprint that segregation was permissible and feasible in Portland. Job loss in 1945 is the main factor for the creation of the entrenched ghetto as "5,500 black shipyard workers (roughly one-third of the city's total black population) lost their jobs," this does not even account for jobs lost by defense workers who lived in Guild's Lake Courts and worked in the steel industries.¹⁹

The Housing Authority of Portland was afraid of defense housing becoming a ghetto, and local policymakers were watching these second ghettos emerge in other cities. If the formation of second ghettos is moved back to 1933, it is easier to understand why policymakers in Portland were so attentive to purging public housing from the landscape as soon as the war ended. There were areas considered blighted in Portland during the Depression but none of these areas of the city were cleared to create public housing. Civic leaders were poised to assure that the lands with large temporary defense housing areas like Vanport and Guild's Lake Courts would be reclaimed for industrial uses. Adding the formation of the private ghetto in Albina enriches the history of Portland second ghettos, Guild's Lake Courts, and Vanport.

Filtering Theory

Filtering theory is empirically inadequate to understand the life cycle of housing and neighborhoods, yet since Ernest Burgess presented the idea in his 1925

the study of neighborhoods in Chicago, the invasion/succession approach to understanding urban housing decline was embraced over many decades.²⁰ Public housing apartment buildings, because they are not bought and sold and are built as affordable, fail to conform to the original context in which upper classes pass on their dwellings as if they were secondhand articles of clothing. This interpretation of the life cycle of buildings as single directional (depreciating) was accepted in the 1930s as the natural order of the housing stock. It assumes that middle- and upper-income households will continually shed houses, which are assumed to decrease in “real” value over time (depreciation over a thirty-year loan to the zero point).

The term “filtering theory” began with Homer Hoyt’s scholarship on the movement of the highest-class housing market in 1939.²¹ Wallace Smith adapted the framework in a case study of Oakland, California, and conjectured that filtering is an effective way to create affordable housing.²² The term “filtering” has no fixed definition in the scholarship.²³ Housing is not a homogenous commodity. Its uniqueness (architecture, age, amenities, location within a neighborhood, quality) helps to explain the failure of filtering theory. Most of the literature on filtering theory in the housing journals has focused on debunking the concept. Interestingly Guild’s Lake Courts is a case study that is a model of filtering theory in that the new buildings were occupied by employed, upwardly mobile individuals, who were replaced, as they moved out after the war, by under-employed families often headed by minorities or single mothers, and then the structures were demolished.

After the residential housing market collapse of the 1930s, the federal mortgage system was established. The system relied on maps created to illustrate which areas were more apt to filter down and thus be risky properties to issue mortgages for. This lack of investment became a self-filling prophecy. The federal government mapped urban areas across the United States in order to project areas of stability in which the federal government would be willing to insure home loans made by local banks. In 1933, the Home Owners Loan Corporation (HOLC) was created within the New Deal as a way to stabilize the home mortgage industry. The HOLC was known for its four-color maps of neighborhood quality, describing a multi-stage neighborhood classification system. With the intention of avoiding underwriting in high-risk neighborhoods, areas with the lowest classification were shaded in red and became known colloquially as “redlined,” a term whose use has expanded to describe any neighborhood where banks are not willing to invest and where real estate agents are unwilling to take their white clients.

Lands were set aside as residential (with the four quality ranks), industrial or commercial. These delineations were initially created to protect the federally insured mortgage system in its infancy. This system had been designed to alleviate the banking problem of balloon mortgages²⁴ that had exacerbated the plight of homeowners during the Great Depression and resulted in intolerable numbers of foreclosures. Policymakers assumed that filtering was one-directional; they introduced programs such as urban renewal into redlined communities since they anticipated no economic return on aging housing stocks. Filtering theory was supported by the

concentric zone model, which draws inferences from bid-rent curves that suggest a logical sorting of locations by discreet residential social groups and separates non-residential uses into concentric rings around the peak land value intersection.

Housing is durable. In any period, only 2 percent of housing on the U.S. market is new. Scholars like William Grigsby, Stephen Malpezzi, and Richard Green are interested in promoting affordable housing policy. They each address the hypothesis that filtering creates affordable housing as a viable method for the creation of housing units for the poor. Scholarship on filtering theory like William Grigsby's work on housing submarkets is limited in its applicability to the conditions of Guild's Lake Courts by focusing on the post-World War II period in the United States. The author expresses concern that a laissez-faire housing market that relies on filtering "typically yields a predominance of new private construction in higher-quality submarkets and is unlikely to yield significant benefits for lower-income households."²⁵ Malpezzi and Green disagree with Grigsby, finding that because of the Section Eight program, filtering is still a viable system in affordable housing. They state that "the commonly held view of low-quality/low-cost housing in the U.S. is that much of it is supplied indirectly through filtering, rather than directly through new construction" and find that this is consistent with what they discovered in the private market.²⁶ Their research is concerned with abnormalities in the housing market that have affected the bottom end. They attribute the failure of the private market to provide adequate housing for the poor to excessive regulation. The number of units that low-income

households could afford declined from 1974 to 1989. Only the rise in Section 8 vouchers has kept this trend in check.

Many of remaining Guild's Lake Courts structures that were moved offsite have undergone gut rehabilitation in their decades of use. Although the study of Guild's Lake Courts is rooted in the 1940s, it is interesting that this development is an almost ideal and compressed example of filtering, in that a few structures did in fact survive in other locations and become gentrified. One case in Multnomah Village, at 2845 SW Spring Garden Street, is just such a structure and is an early case of condo-conversion in Portland.

Most of the scholarship of the last twenty years has focused on debunking filtering theory. Yet, despite the fallacies with filtering theory, Guild's Lake Courts is a case study that fits the theory. New housing gets built; employed people from all walks of life move in; as time passes, those with means move out and poorer folks move in; as housing shows signs of wear, evacuees who are worse off move in; and at the end of the process, the housing is demolished. In this case a condensed time period of nine years encapsulates a thirty-year depreciation cycle.

Defense Housing: Key Scholars

What little knowledge housing scholars have of defense housing is focused on redevelopment of older housing units with new designs intended to reduce crime. As familiar as scholars might be with architect and city planner Oscar Newman's case study of Clason Point Gardens in the South Bronx,²⁷ it is rare that any scholars would

know by name any other defense housing project than Vanport. Miles L. Colean was one of the policy experts hired to define the federal defense housing program; fortunately he was extensively interviewed three decades later, so not only is his first policy piece available, but also a manuscript of his reflections on the defense housing program as part of an oral history. As for impartial scholars who study the federal and city roles in public housing, only Philip Funigiello and Kristin Szylvian offered insightful, in-depth exploration of defense housing within the national context and as part of a struggle for power in the dynamic city-federal government relationship. Both focus on the federal public housing program and its relationship with local housing authorities as it was expanded and operated in the 1940s.

Miles L. Colean was an assistant administrator in the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) until 1940 when he became research director of housing for the Twentieth Century Fund, a nonpartisan foundation that researches and writes about progressive public policy. His 1940 report, released just prior to his resignation from the FHA, is a primary source document, *Housing for Defense: A Review of the Role of Housing in Relation to America's Defense and Program for Action*, became the guide for the development of defense-era housing. Colean promoted federal funds being spent on rental housing because, he argued, there are hidden costs to homeownership:

“Pay yourself rent” glosses over the hidden costs of ownership in return on equity, depreciation, maintenance and replacement costs, reserves against contingencies, and so forth, for which the rental operator must make a charge in his rent bill. It also exaggerates the disputed financial advantage of ownership.²⁸

The character and quality of World War II defense housing was shaped by public perception and the federal housing experience from World War I,²⁹ which is generally thought to have focused more on the quality of construction than on the need to produce large numbers of units in a short period of time. In his oral history published in 1975, Colean recalls that his efforts to establish a framework for a wartime housing program involved assuring that the government did not make the same mistakes that had been made in World War I. The new housing program he helped create would meet the needs of defense workers and their families, particularly in shipyards.³⁰

Race issues were not included in the policy established for wartime housing. This is possibly a blind spot on Colean's part, or may reflect the fact that direct precedents did not exist, since the housing built in World War I was perhaps occupied exclusively by whites. Colean also had what turned out to be false confidence in the private market's ability to provide worker rental housing through filtering. His premise that "residents not necessarily associated with defense activity may continue to buy, and their removal to new units may increase the supply of rental units in older buildings"³¹ fell apart once rationing of construction materials inhibited private developers. He acknowledges that there is "an absolute shortage of materials themselves, due to preemption of output by defense requirements."³² Colean did not consider the long-term implications of the supply shortages, which reduced the quality of federal defense housing construction. He went so far as to demand the liberalization of fire and building codes, which he perceived as arbitrary and outmoded hindrances

to modern construction: “Such provisions as those which arbitrarily rule out the use of inexpensive, and rapidly applied, materials, or which have no other justification than the increase of work to be done on the job, can be eliminated at once.”³³

The secondary scholarship of Philip Funigiello and Kristin M. Szylvian made them the most approachable Defense-era scholars. Funigiello explores the manifestation of federal-city relations during the war with housing as a piece of a puzzle of evolving federal-city relations. Kristin M. Szylvian’s essay “The Federal Housing Program during World War II” distills the entire period into a concise presentation and is the first work to divide the World War II federal housing program into three distinct phases, each with its own unique policy goals; she leaves the dates open-ended as each Housing Authority had slightly different dates: 1) the Defense Phase to mid-1940, 2) the War Phase to February 1942, and 3) the Disposition Phase “after the war ended in 1945 and [which] extended over a decade.”³⁴ Funigiello is critical of Colean, whom he criticizes for ignoring the future of a sustainable public housing program structured around the examples of the New Deal. Scholars agree that the urgency of the need to construct housing for defense workers quickly robbed the administrators of foresight, and they bent to the will of private developers unwilling to compete with a “social” federal building program. This urgency also constrained efforts by housing reformers to create model housing within model communities. Republicans in Congress, many of whom represented rural constituencies, limited the defense housing budget. Funigiello states, “They did not want the money channeled to the USHA [United States Housing Authority] and the big cities for ‘socialist

experiments,' and they intended to make certain that the public housing would not emerge after the war to compete with private enterprise."³⁵

In particular, the plight of African American defense workers, unable to find housing in the private market, spurred the program on. The fear of interracial wartime housing created a politically explosive situation.³⁶ The story of public housing in Portland, as in many other U.S. cities, shows that asset development was hindered by policies that prevented gainfully employed African American workers in the defense industry from investing in property and becoming homeowners, thereby missing an important asset-accumulating opportunity. The inequality created by the lack of a permeable, open real estate market has had lasting socio-economic consequences.

These socio-economic consequences arguably hit migrant families with young children the hardest. What Todd Michney learned in his study of World War II public housing in Cleveland brings up an issue of housing discrimination that was not outlawed until 1988, when families became a protected class under the fair housing laws. It was two decades after the passage of Civil Rights Housing Act of 1968 (known as the Fair Housing Act), which defined race, religion and national origin as protected classes under the law. Interestingly in Cleveland, just as in Guild's Lake Courts, it was both white and African American families with children that were refused accommodations in the private market and became the most dependent on "temporary war housing estates."³⁷ There was a practice to place temporary war housing on leased land, a practice which then is not as unique to Portland as had been thought.³⁸ The activities of each city's Real Estate Boards, war housing practices, and

the racial tensions that simmered in these northern cities certainly enhance the understanding of the period's public housing. Development practices that Michney reflects on were not integration successes in the social activities but rather settling racial tensions to insure short-term decent human relations.³⁹ The isolation at Cleveland's Seville Homes was more comparable to Vanport than to Guild's Lake Courts; because Guild's Lake Courts was not geographically isolated, the need to integrate socially was not strong. In Cleveland as in most American cities, temporary housing remained a continued presence for decades after the end of the war.

According to Szylvian, by 1955, 87% of all defense era housing had been liquidated.⁴⁰ Szylvian constructs a viable framework for exploring defense housing, as well as acknowledging that this period of public housing history is more dense than other periods of federal housing development. A small number of permanent, family-type defense housing developments, about 1.9% of the total units built during the war years, were conveyed by the federal government to local public housing authorities for the use of low-income families after the war. During the war years the Housing Authorities managed these public housing properties but it appears that the federal government owned the deeds on the defense housing units and in some cases the land as well. Szylvian states that "most assessments of the war housing have failed to take into consideration that the goals of wartime housing changed over time."⁴¹ Under her new construct, Szylvian presents wartime housing as a mixed bag of good and bad elements that did, in fact, contribute significantly to the evolution of public housing.

Life Cycle during World War II: Key Scholarship

Two sources of information about civilian life on the homefront in the Defense era proved useful, not only for their reflections on life during the war years, but also how they effectively integrated traditional history scholarship with oral histories. Amy Kesselman's work, *Fleeing Opportunities*, looks at the labor experiences of women in the shipyards in Portland and Vancouver. The research draws upon transcripts and tapes from forty-five interviews (sixteen of which were conducted by the author). William M. Tuttle Jr.'s work, *"Daddy's Gone to War": The Second World War in the Lives of America's Children*, relied on 2,500 letters he solicited from adults who had lived on the "homefront" as children.

Tuttle's study is a comprehensive history of childhood in 1940s America. Tuttle's reflections on his methodology are as insightful for the research as his contributions to understanding the experiences of children in the war years:

...historians should not look to oral history, retrospective letters, or other narratives as a way of "proving" anything.... On the other hand, there is no doubt that it is people's stories—whether gathered through interviews, diaries, or letters—that enable scholars to peel away the layers of anonymity that have hidden America's plain folk from view.⁴²

Tuttle's work was invaluable to understand memories that were expressed by interviewees about their childhoods at Guild's Lake Courts. Reading details of the lives of Tuttle's informants helped me understand that the childhood memories of Guild's Lake Courts residents revealed typical behaviors and experiences that might be more common to public housing in general than specific to the Guild's Lake site. Tuttle was willing to explore childhood psychology to help extrapolate the meanings

of the memories he was presented and interweave into his archival source material. Thematic topics of particular interest for this research were “rearing preschool children,” “school-age children fight the war,” “children play war games,” and “the fractured homefront: racial and cultural hostility.”

The chapter on racial and cultural hostility had limited information on the experience of African American children and put into perspective the number of groups facing unequal treatment in the war years due to prejudice. One drawback is that there is only one illustration, on the cover. This makes for a less intimate and illustrative history than other source material that includes images as well as text.

Amy Kesselman’s and Polly Myers’s explorations of labor history in the Pacific Northwest fill a void in the research on Guild’s Lake Courts. Companies like Kaiser and Boeing heavily recruited female employees with ads slogans like: “Women! Even if you have never done anything except for housework there’s almost certainly a job for you here at Boeing.”⁴³ Because the bulk of Kesselman’s interviews were conducted in 1981, the demographic profile was distinctly different than the scope of the Guild’s Lake Courts study. *Fleeting Opportunities: Women Shipyard Workers in Portland and Vancouver during World War II* gathers information from mothers, nurses and teachers actively employed in the metropolitan region of Vancouver, Washington, and Portland, Oregon, in the 1940s. Despite only one reference to Guild’s Lake Courts in the index, there are many consistencies in the narrative, since individuals in all locations experienced the same factories and work routines. Kesselman tackles society’s lack of comfort with federal programs

promoting working mothers and how Henry Kaiser circumvented those societal norms and government bureaucracy to fuel his industrial production machine. The text is augmented with illustrations that give the reader a direct view of some of the experiences of many female residents from Vanport who worked in the defense industries during the war. Chapter three, “Welding the Seams of the Double Day,” is the story of the development of childcare and after-school services for children of working mothers in Portland, with a focus on the two nurseries built by the Kaiser Corporation onsite at two of his shipyards. That chapter helps the reader understand the regional variations that make the Portland-Vancouver region unique and set it apart from the national context and development of defense housing.

Polly Myers explored how Boeing Aircraft Company struggled to maintain an all-white male workforce and resisted hiring women in “Boeing Aircraft Company’s Manpower Campaign during World War II,” which created tensions as women entered the production lines in Seattle and Renton. In 1943, 44 percent of the Boeing workers in Seattle and Renton were women.⁴⁴ Polly Myers focused her exploration of the Boeing Company corporation in the minutes of official meetings, *Boeing News*, union records, and Boeing reports; this was a contrast to Kesselman’s use of oral histories, creating a different balance on the presentation of women in the workforce, one which shifts the story to the lens of the employer. The depictions of African American employees by the company is explored by looking at demeaning captions included *Boeing News* under photographs of African American employees as a way to

minimize the role of minorities in the workforce and to defuse managers' fear of disorder and hostility within the workforce.⁴⁵

Portland during the 1940s

Portland, Oregon, has been the subject of a number of general histories. Since the 1940s were a transformative era for the city, there is a vast amount of documentation and events that occurred in a small window of time. With the exception of E. Kimbark MacColl, most authors pass quickly over Guild's Lake Courts in the effort to offer a broad, balanced history of the city over many decades. Guild's Lake Courts existed in the shadow of Vanport, and the calamity that happened at Vanport with the flood of May 1948 absorbs the balance of time spent by authors in their effort to discuss the rise and fall of defense housing in Portland.

E. Kimbark MacColl: Power and Politics

In the 1970s E. Kimbark MacColl wrote three books covering the history of Portland. The book that covers the 1940s is *The Growth of a City: Power and Politics in Portland, Oregon, 1915–1950*. In it MacColl presents the most comprehensive and detailed narrative of the political and financial history of the metro region written to date. He describes Vanport as over-crowded and quotes a critic who calls it the worst-planned city of all time. In the same familiar tone he details the strategy used to restrict “Negro” housing and to resolve interracial conflicts by eliminating dwelling units at Guild's Lake Courts and Vanport. He explains how after the war ended, HAP

was more concerned with returning the property at Guild's Lake Courts to Standard Oil of California, Pacific Chain, Mt. Hood Soap and the largest landowner, SP&S Railway than it was about finding new housing for residents. MacColl does not just report the details; he takes a position, calling the attitudes of these companies and government agencies callous and calling those capitalists invested in Guild's Lake District landholdings "entrenched, insensitive and greedy," destined to prevail by sheer force of will and desire for profits.⁴⁶ Presenting his own position on historic events is consistent throughout his works.

He touches on all twenty-five HAP public housing projects, including the racial problems in Vanport and Guild's Lake Courts—projects that were plagued by their "segregated inelegance."⁴⁷ This work includes a photomontage of row-house dwellings in Guild's Lake Courts, and MacColl discusses the similar "crackerbox" housing at the two Defense-era developments.⁴⁸ He discusses how Edgar Kaiser's vision to make Vanport a permanent residential community was foiled by the flood, how other powerful industrialists were in conflict with his vision, and how many opponents saw no need for public housing after the war. Issues of race made housing provision a loaded issue, where those in power—including the members of the HAP board—saw no need for the continuance of public housing.⁴⁹ That section is a personal attack on the Hoffman family, who forced the eviction of sixty-two households at Guild's Lake Courts in order to sell off the land parcels they owned there to a buyer whom Mrs. Lee Hawley Hoffman refused to disclose. An interesting fact in the book was that in 1950 HAP voted to desegregate all its housing projects, an action to

promote community goodwill, since all its segregated housing communities had been demolished.

Carl Abbott: Planning and Politics

Three works by Carl Abbott were used; two were general histories—*Portland: Planning Politics, and Growth in a Twentieth-Century City* (1983) and *Greater Portland: Urban Life and Landscape in the Pacific Northwest* (2001)—and the third was specific to the site where Guild’s Lake Courts was built: *The Great Extravaganza: Portland and the Lewis and Clark Exposition* (1981). *Greater Portland* is influenced by the increasing interest in environmental history; the effort is to detail how Portland evolved into the well-planned livable city. The focus is on how citizens and civic leaders made Portland a success and how the geography of place is critical to that story. The character study of how Portland evolved to become its current self makes Guild’s Lake Courts irrelevant because it did not impact the creation of the successful downtown core or outdoor activity nodes.

Portland: Planning, Politics, and Growth in a Twentieth-Century City is a wonderful overview of city history and certainly shows how working among urban planning colleagues has enabled Carl Abbott to contextualize urban history beyond power brokers and politicians and explore how urban planning practice and landscape preservation has shaped the city. He is also willing to explore the role of the Portland Development Commission (PDC) in city development; unlike MacColl, Abbott does not use the presentation of history to criticize individual decisions of politicians and

the elite. The key chapters for understanding context of Guild's Lake Courts and 1940s Portland is chapter 6, "The Pacific War," but most interesting is chapter 7, "Back to Normalcy, 1946–56" indicating that during the war years when the public housing program was booming, Portland was not really its true self, that Guild's Lake Courts was more of an aberration than a part of what made Portland the city it was becoming.

Jewel Lansing: Mayoral Politics

Jewel Lansing is not a trained historian; her knowledge of how Portland politics shape the city results from her hands-on experience in local politics. She served as the elected City of Portland auditor from 1983 to 1986 and as Multnomah County auditor from 1975 to 1982. Her access to and understanding of source materials often overlooked by historians make her book *Portland: People, Politics, and Power 1851–2001* a valuable source of new insights into city politics. She touches on Mayor Riley's desire to demolish Vanport and the "anti-negro" sentiment of the times in city hall. Guild's Lake is just referred to as Portland's second-largest temporary housing project and the only development other than Vanport to house "negroes"; otherwise the development earns no mention in the text.⁵⁰ She focuses on Portland's mayors and commissioners, the key issues of the day, the deals that politicians made, and the personalities that propelled these actions.

Interestingly, her main sources include the private papers of E. Kimbark MacColl; her task appears to be to seek to improve on his details because of the

increased public access to city documents. Unfortunately, she often fails to place her own interpretation on events; rather, she bolsters personal opinions made by MacColl. The history is presented sequentially and is enhanced by images and offbeat sidebars.

Portland Agencies in the 1940s

The local agencies that were active in Guild's Lake Courts were not as familiar as the Boy Scouts. They were the Housing Authority of Portland, the Fruit and Flower Day Mission Nursery and the Portland Police Sunshine Division. These agencies, specific to Portland, were included in the research in an effort to understand the critical role they played in the daily lives of its citizens. There exist a few self-published, self-promoting publications dealing with their history. These sources reflect the general lack of information or interest in Guild's Lake Courts. Despite this lack of focus, each source helped to explain the motivations and philosophy of that agency in regards to its interactions with the residents of Guild's Lake Courts. Information on other non-religious, non-governmental organizations like the Cub Scouts, Boy Scouts, Blue Birds, Campfire Girls, Girl Scouts and the YWCA and YMCA were not examined because of their continued national presence and broader familiarity.

The following authors are not all trained historians and are working directly with an agency to create a historic document with the intention of promoting the works of that agency. These are all local agencies with a mission to support the underserved in the Portland community and a need to use the document to enhance image and assist in fundraising measures.

Richard Sanders' *Glimpses from the Past: The Housing Authority of Portland: Fifty Years of Building a Better Community* was a book intended to promote HAP, to entertain the reader with coffee table images and text pushing for sound public housing policy in the future. The history presented avoids dwelling on conflicts and through various omissions presents a lopsided but glorious history of HAP. The text is organized chronologically, and two of the eight chapters of the work focus on Vanport: "Vanport—from Triumph to Tragedy" and "The Great Flood of 1948."⁵¹ The work is invaluable for framing the history of HAP and for understanding the hurdles Guild's Lake Courts had to contend with in the construction phase. The two developments built in the 1940s that are examined in detail are Columbia Villa and Vanport. The accounts of these two developments continue to overshadow any effort to present a comprehensive history of the public housing operated by HAP in the 1940s. Clearly, when the book was published in 1991 to commemorate the first 50 years of HAP's existence, Columbia Villa drew attention as the oldest housing project in the HAP portfolio that was still operating. Even though Vanport had been washed away, it was included in the book because of its national recognition as the largest public housing development ever built.

Lori Shea Kuechler's work, *The Portland Police Sunshine Division: An Early History*, is an example of how commissioned histories can gloss over unpleasant aspects of an organization's actions. The Portland Police Department Sunshine Division originated in 1922 during an economic downturn in Portland. Its mission was, and still is, to collect donated food and clothing and distribute it to individuals

and families in need. The work is managed by volunteers who are drawn out of the ranks of the police department. This self-published history was designed to be relevant to today's benefactors, so the focus of the narrative promotes the organization's good works to assert that the police force has always been community minded. In the 1940s the Sunshine Division was inactive; the author gives the profitability and access to jobs as the reason that the organization experienced limited demand for its services. Additionally its ranks of volunteer labor were thinned, as half the police force had enlisted to serve in the war.⁵² While the Sunshine Division is depicted as an emergency food relief organization, in fact student truancy in the early years of World War II and the lack of summer schools after 1946 had the Police Sunshine Division active in Guild's Lake Courts.

The focus is directed on the programs in continuous operation rather than a discussion of an antiquated program like the Junior Patrol program, which was a program under the direction of the Sunshine Division. It therefore has say about value-laden practices such as a teenage crime prevention within a segregated community that no one has ever heard of. By comparison a food basket program is fairly politically placid and a generally positive historic note in the activities of the local police department's philanthropic branch.

Published in 1979, Danielle L. Hopkins' *Fruit and Flower: The History of Oregon's First Day Care Center* was designed to promote the Fruit and Flower organization for the purposes of fundraising and enriching community memory. The book draws from forty-four years of archival materials, which the author was working

on reorganizing after the daycare center was relocated from the Portland State University location to the new center on Irving in Northwest Portland. The book is arranged by topic rather than chronology. Two examples of these topics are “From Day Nursery to Child Care Center” and “A Century of Fund Raising.”⁵³ Because the two Fruit and Flower daycare programs that operated at Guild’s Lake Courts were short-lived and only served around two hundred children in totality, they do not figure prominently in the book. The street addresses of these operations were never referenced in the book. Even so, the story of this long-lived, private, not-for-profit agency offers great insights into where the nurseries at Guild’s Lake Courts fit into the general acceptance and appreciation American society has today for an entity dedicated to early childhood education.

The Portland African American Experience in the 1940s

The experience of blacks in Portland during the 1940s was unique to this city, because they comprised a rather small percentage of the population for a major West Coast city—a situation that continues today. In that era, Portland life had a tinge of Southern culture, part of which was racial prejudice that had been percolating since the 1920s with the political strength of the KKK. Just how a city with such a small African American population became active in the Klan is covered in Kenneth T. Jackson’s 1967 work, *The Ku Klux Klan in the City, 1915–1930*, chapter fourteen: “Portland: The Headquarters of the Realm.” The scholarship about the African American experience in Portland appears to be an effort to balance years of neglect

and to atone for past injustices. The authors, who focus on the African American experience in the 1940s, are trying to make sense of the colossal tragedy of the Vanport Flood and how the subsequent treatment of African Americans shaped that community.

The intent of the following authors is less transparent than the agency historians because they make sincere efforts to present balanced histories for scholarly publications. Each author is motivated to focus on a critical period of recent Portland history in an effort to preserve and reflect on regional housing solutions. Heather Fryer presented scholarship in the *Pacific Northwest Quarterly* regarding the propaganda machine that promoted war housing efforts in the provincial city. It demonstrates the efforts of the Portland Art Museum to contend with the critics of the designs and an effort to prove with models and blueprints that these were well planned freedom-generating communities. She explores how African American housing was pushed towards the periphery despite the vision and promise of the housing that praised the unification of a multi-ethnic workforce: “condemned Jim Crow on paper while turning a blind eye to racist acts.”⁵⁴ Her premise that African American workers were promised integration is somewhat flawed or simply unsubstantiated. She does deftly handle the tensions in the war era between the established African Americans and the massive wave of Southern migrants.

The focus on African American history and homefront history continues to dominate the official history Portland celebrates yearly during Black History Month. *Vanport* by Manly Maben is the most comprehensive work available on daily life in

Vanport. Maben did most of the research for this book as a graduate student at Portland State University, and draws upon archival documents, particularly Housing Authority of Portland files and Oregon Historical Society images; there are no oral histories cited in the notes. The text introduces Vanport as a planner's utopia and then presents the contrary story of the community as an awkward place for people to live where African Americans were quietly settled.⁵⁵ The most massive government housing project ever built in the United States, Vanport is presented as a sociological experiment used to reflect the changes made in America, linking the community to the 1940s period as a case study of change in American culture that was a wartime aberration. Segregation and the increasing percentage of the African American population at Vanport are presented as "a frame work within which [Portland] could find its own solutions to racial tensions during a time period when the problem was not so severe as to polarize attitudes. It helped Portland create a pattern of pragmatically seeking solutions."⁵⁶ The issue of race is segregated within the text, just as the community was segregated at the site. Guild's Lake Courts is mentioned only twice (both times as the "smaller project"), but there are strong parallels that can be drawn to Guild's Lake Courts from the work.⁵⁷

Rudy Pearson, Stuart McElderry and Heather Fryer each tackled the issue of race in 1940s Portland, yet none of these scholars were able to delve into the significance of Guild's Lake Courts as a key factor in the effort to alleviate overcrowding of African Americans in the Albina neighborhood. McElderry is keenly aware that HAP's segregation practices not only limited African Americans to choose

between Vanport and Guild's Lake Courts but also that the "practice reinforced the racist attitudes of many whites toward their fellow tenants and limited the number of units available to blacks."⁵⁸ This acceptance and politically supported systematic system of segregation resulted in "black flood victims [being] placed in overcrowded and in some cases deplorable Swan Island barracks."⁵⁹

Recipient of an *Oregon Historical Quarterly* award for his article "A Menace to the Neighborhood: Housing and African Americans in Portland, 1941–1945," Rudy Pearson condensed his prior work on the African American experience in Portland to focus on housing discrimination. In his unpublished doctoral dissertation, "African Americans in Portland, Oregon, 1940–1950: Living and Working Conditions—A Social History," Rudy Pearson looked at two major factors in the African American experience in Portland: work and housing.⁶⁰ The first two chapters discuss the flush times of the war years when African Americans were employed in the local defense industries, followed by a chapter about the underemployment of African Americans after the war. The next three chapters discuss housing discrimination, and the dissertation concludes with a chapter on the impact of the Vanport Flood on a community already suffering high unemployment and very limited housing options. The lack of housing options resulted from legal discriminatory practices such as redlining and unfair postwar hiring practices; the flood took those factors and added tragedy.

Pearson explores the role of activists within the African American community and their efforts to fight for a more progressive Portland through their churches and

groups like the NAACP and the Urban League. Of particular interest are the interactions between African American tenant groups and HAP and between African American activists and the trade unions. Activism within Portland is linked to national efforts to stimulate the African American community and to African American activists who traveled the country speaking to church and Urban League members. Portland's African American community of 1940 was hampered because there was not a pre-existing power base to form a foundation for change. The city would profit from the rapid growth as a result of lucrative but unjust employment, but the ability to agitate for a more equitable society was hampered by the constant crisis management created by the flood and urban renewal.

Pearson drew from twenty-seven interviews and oral histories in addition to articles, reports and unpublished academic works. He relied heavily on newspaper sources. His focus on inequalities for African Americans in labor and housing in Portland sets the stage for how the segregation at Guild's Lake Courts and Vanport created a tinderbox for problematic postwar African American–white relations. Also, because migrants from the South were in the majority within Portland's African American community, southern African Americans had an unusual opportunity to set an agenda for a more aggressive effort towards economic and housing equity. The city government was reluctant to acknowledge racial tensions, and Pearson's use of the African American media, both local and national, juxtaposed with the white media shows the rapid divergence of these communities in their postwar visions for Portland's future. Pearson accepts the claim that fifty individuals lost their lives in the

flood,⁶¹ quoting several persons from the African American community who articulate their belief that the white community allowed the flood to happen.⁶²

Stuart McElderry's 1998 article, published in the *Oregon Historical Quarterly* on the fiftieth anniversary of the Vanport Flood, puts to rest the conflicting death toll reports. The article "Vanport Conspiracy Rumors and Social Relations in Portland, 1940–1950" is a true crime story. McElderry is a masterful presenter, aptly able to present the rumors as false and untangle how poor treatment of victims and a history of racism acted as a catalyst for false information. He removes the fault from individuals who perpetuated the higher death toll for decades because they shared a distrust of HAP officials and city leaders as misguided victims, and he places it on a capricious press willing to exploit a crisis to sell newspapers. Fabricated rumors were grounded in a history of mistrust and acerbated by HAP's unwillingness to mediate with residents regarding operations and policies, in particular their segregation policies: "In 1944 the agency suppressed a critical investigative article, accepted for publication by the *Saturday Evening Post*, which attributed low morale in Vanport to HAP's management style."⁶³ The flood seemed too convenient for victims who were previously aware that residents of HAP housing, both African American and white, were unwanted after the war. McElderry cites the killing of Ervin Jones in August 1945 at Guild's Lake Courts as a key factor in "black Portlander's mistrust of local officials."⁶⁴

It is interesting that one of two police killings of African American victims started with an incident in Guild's Lake Courts. These killings eroded the faith of the

war-era migrants. The killing by a police officer, the lack of a trial after two inquests where the district attorney selected all-white grand juries, and the fact that Portland's city council passed a motion to cover all of the attorney fees for Mr. Jones's killer set the stage of distrust of those in power in Portland within the African American community. McElderry uses the killings at Guild's Lake Courts and the courtroom which illustrated the prevalence of Jim Crow in the North to set the stage for why race relations were so poor in Portland that reputable people believed that more than fifteen people were killed in the flood.

Conclusion

The sources used in this literature review are the foundation needed to support our understanding of social life and race relations in wartime Portland and to place the history of a single federal housing development into both national and local context. This project fills a gap in our knowledge of wartime Portland and also in a national sense the childhood experience in federal defense housing. The traditional racial relations and social parameters are easily set aside by children when adults are not present to supervise their children's relationships; racial hate is taught and constructed. It was a period in which a curiously fast-paced filtering of the housing stock transpired to fit this housing theory that has been marginalized but is depicted in this evolution. This was on one hand a segregated suburban community on the fringe of a booming city and on the other hand an urbanizing community where children were assimilated into urban America. The tension over the appropriate role for the federal government

should play in housing production and operation continues to resonate. Most of the sources provide valid background on general interpretations of the natural and unnatural experience on the homefront in the war years. A few also offer pieces of information about Guild's Lake Courts but not a complete picture.

Sanders' commissioned history of HAP, which disregards Guild's Lake Courts, is the most demonstrative of the institutional erasure of Guild's Lake Courts from memory. The text of the book is available online at the HAP website and with each download continues to teach a slanted and incomplete history of public housing history in Portland. Sanders' oversight is more damaging than the omission made by other historians because his source is treated as a definitive history of the housing authority, a source scholars will continue to seek out when searching out details after reading the comprehensive city of Portland histories.

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- ² Frederick Engels, *The Housing Question. Part Two: How the Bourgeoisie Solves the Housing Question*, 1872, <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1872/housing-question/> (accessed May 3, 2005).
- ³ Engels, *The Housing Question. Part Three*.
- ⁴ Thomas S. Holden, "Supplement: Proceedings of the American Statistical Association," *Journal of the American Statistical Association* 25, no. 169 (Mar. 1930): 66.
- ⁵ Gail Radford, "The Federal Government and Housing during the Great Depression," in *From Tenements to Taylor Homes: In Search of an Urban Housing Policy in Twentieth-Century America*, edited by John F. Bauman, Roger Biles, and Kristin M. Szylvian (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000), 116.
- ⁶ Howard Husock, *America's Trillion-Dollar Housing Mistake: The Failure of American Housing Policy* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee Publisher, 2003).
- ⁷ "Land Acquisition for Housing," *Real Estate Record* 135 (March 2, 1935): 4.
- ⁸ Peter Marcuse, "The Case of the Housing Problem," in *Critical Perspectives on Housing*, edited by Rachel Bratt, Chester Hartman, and Ann Meyerson (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986), 5.
- ⁹ Paul Grogan and Tony Proscio, *Comeback Cities: A Blueprint for Urban Neighborhood Revival* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2000), 187.
- ¹⁰ Kenneth T. Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (London: Oxford University Press, 1985), 219–230.
- ¹¹ Arnold R. Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto: Race and Housing in Chicago, 1940–1960* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 2, 9.
- ¹² At the end of the World War II, Chicago's housing portfolio consisted of only 7,644 units, half of which were occupied by African Americans.
- ¹³ Arnold R. Hirsch, "'Containment' in the Home Front: Race and Federal Housing Policy from the New Deal to the Cold War," *Journal of Urban History*, 26, no. 2 (2000): 180.
- ¹⁴ Mohl, Raymond A. 2003. The second ghetto thesis and the power of history. *Journal of Urban History*, 29(3), pp. 243-56.
- ¹⁵ Arnold R. Hirsch, "Second Thoughts on the Second Ghetto," *Journal of Urban History* 29 (2003): 298–309.
- ¹⁶ Quintard Taylor, "The Great Migration: The Afro-American Communities of Seattle and Portland During the 1940s," *Arizona and the West* 23, no. 2 (1981): 117, 118, 122.
- ¹⁷ Amanda Seligman, *Block by Block: Neighborhoods and Public Policy on Chicago's West Side* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 277.
- ¹⁸ Stuart McElderry, "Building a West Coast Ghetto: African-American Housing in Portland, 1910–1960," *Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 92, no. 3 (2001): 140.
- ¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 141.
- ²⁰ Ernest W. Burgess, "The Growth of the City," in *The City*, edited by Robert E. Park and Ernest W. Burgess (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1925), 47-62.
- ²¹ Homer Hoyt, *The Structure and Growth of Residential Neighborhoods in American Cities* (Washington, DC: U.S. Federal Housing Administration, 1939).
- ²² Wallace Smith, *Filtering and Neighborhood Change* (Berkeley: University of California Center for Real Estate and Urban Economics, 1964).
- ²³ George Galster, "Comments on John T. Metzger's 'Planned Abandonment: The Neighborhood Life-Cycle Theory and National Urban Policy,'" *Housing Policy Debate* 11, no. 2 (2000): 62.
- ²⁴ In this type of home financing, the entire amount of the loan comes due at once. Typically only interest has been paid monthly during the loan term. This was a very common loan type prior to the Great Depression.

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- ²⁵ George Galster, "William Grigsby and the Analysis of Housing Sub-Markets and Filtering," *Urban Studies* 33, no. 10 (1996): 1799.
- ²⁶ Stephen Malpezzi and Richard Green, "What Has Happened to the Bottom of the U.S. Housing Market?" *Urban Studies* 33, no. 10 (1996): 1807–1820.
- ²⁷ Oscar Newman, *Defensible Space: Crime Prevention through Urban Design* (New York: Collier Books, 1972), 163–175.
- ²⁸ Miles Colean, *Housing for Defense: A Review of the Role of Housing in Relation to America's Defense and Program for Action* (1940; repr. New York: Arno Press, 1978), 95.
- ²⁹ *Ibid.*, 16.
- ³⁰ Miles Colean, *A Backward Glance: An Oral History: The Growth of Government Housing Policy in the United States, 1934–1975* [Interview with Scott Bruns] (New York: Columbia University Oral History Research Office, 1975), 59.
- ³¹ Colean, *Housing for Defense*, 93.
- ³² *Ibid.*, 85.
- ³³ *Ibid.*, 84.
- ³⁴ Kristin M. Szylyvian, "The Federal Housing Program during World War II," in *From Tenements to the Taylor Homes: In Search of an Urban Housing Policy in 20th Century America*, edited by John F. Bauman, Roger Biles and Kristin M. Szylyvian (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000), 122.
- ³⁵ Colean, *Housing for Defense*, 88.
- ³⁶ *Ibid.*, 98.
- ³⁷ Todd Michney, "Constrained Communities: Black Cleveland's Experience with World War II Public Housing," *Journal of Social History* 40, no. 4 (2007): 933.
- ³⁸ *Ibid.*, 940.
- ³⁹ *Ibid.*, 946.
- ⁴⁰ Szylyvian, "The Federal Housing Program during World War II," 133.
- ⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 134.
- ⁴² William M. Tuttle Jr., "*Daddy's Gone to War*": *The Second World War in the Lives of America's Children* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), xix. Tuttle reflects in his thoughts on methodology that using a memoir allows for more distance between the researcher and the subject than using letters. For my own study, the methods for soliciting subjects for letters is not practical when trying to reach a smaller populations. The use of face-to-face interviews is yet another step away from the comfortable scholarly distance.
- ⁴³ Polly Myers, "Boeing Aircraft Company's Manpower Campaign during World War II," *Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 98 (2007): 192.
- ⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 184.
- ⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 193.
- ⁴⁶ E. Kimbark MacColl, *The Growth of a City: Power Politics in Portland, Oregon, 1915–1950* (Portland, OR: Georgian Press, 1979), 601.
- ⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 580.
- ⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 580 (see image caption).
- ⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 593.
- ⁵⁰ Jewel Lansing, *Portland: People, Politics, and Power 1851–2001* (Corvallis, OR: Oregon State University Press, 2003), 342–343.
- ⁵¹ Richard Sanders, *Glimpses from the Past: The Housing Authority of Portland: Fifty Years of Building a Better Community* (Portland, OR: Housing Authority of Portland, 1991), 29–56.
- ⁵² Lori Shea Kuechler, *The Portland Police Sunshine Division: An Early History. Sunshine Division* (Portland, OR: Portland Police Bureau, 2003), 98.
- ⁵³ Danielle L. Hopkins, *Fruit and Flower: The History of Oregon's First Day Care Center* (Portland, OR: Fruit and Flower Child Care Center, 1979), 37–61.

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- ⁵⁴ Heather Fryer, "Race, Industry, and the Aesthetic of Changing Community in World War II Portland," *Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 96, no. 1 (2004/2005): 8.
- ⁵⁵ Manly Maben, *Vanport* (Portland: Oregon Historical Society Press, 1987), 92.
- ⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 89.
- ⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 87, 96.
- ⁵⁸ McElderry, "Building a West Coast Ghetto," 140.
- ⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 142.
- ⁶⁰ Rudy Pearson, "African Americans in Portland, Oregon, 1940–1950: Living and Working Conditions—A Social History," unpublished dissertation, Washington State University (May 1996).
- ⁶¹ Various accounts put the number between 10 and a few hundred, and no one really knows the exact death toll but it was a low figure. This uncertainty had left room for many theories about the circumstances leading up to the collapse of the dikes surrounding the city.
- ⁶² Pearson, "African Americans in Portland," 215.
- ⁶³ Stuart McElderry, "Vanport Conspiracy Rumors and Social Relations in Portland, 1940–1950," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 99, no. 2 (Summer 1998): 149.
- ⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 158.

CHAPTER 3:

GOVERNMENT HOUSING BACKGROUND

This chapter covers housing issues from the national context of federal housing programs to a focus on race and housing in Portland, Oregon. From the beginning, federal housing programs were seeped in racial tension, eventually codified. Portland, with more than 18,000 units of public housing thanks to its booming defense industry, had to contend with the ensuing racism. In 1945, there were 2,125 public housing units designated for African-Americans in three housing developments in Portland, and the waiting list for these units was longer than the list maintained by HAP for the units designated for whites. The ensuing tensions that resulted from the sudden increase of the African American population perpetuated racial unrest, the new white and African American arrivals were segregated geographically and socially. African Americans for the first time in Portland were residentially segregated, the pre-war population saw their standing slipping in the community as the seeds for future segregation were planted in public housing ghettos. Federal public housing policies and suburban lending practices exacerbated urban racial segregation for decades. This chapter explores the first efforts of public housing in the United States and how the history of public housing in Portland prior to the Civil Rights Act deviated and followed these national patterns.

Federal Housing Programs, 1911–1941

In the first half of the twentieth century the United States faced several housing crises exacerbated by two mass migrations and by extensive unemployment in the

1930s that triggered widespread foreclosures. The federal government responded to these crises with mixed success. The inherent inability to predict how long a crisis would last and the localized mortgage system were key factors in why many programs to create rental housing never gained the momentum to be institutionalized. Many of the federal housing programs discussed in this chapter were discontinued once the impetus behind them was resolved. By the 1940s, federal housing programs had established the reputation and experience needed to create the massive program of defense housing during World War II. That said, it is disconcerting how similar the housing shortage issues in ship-building centers were in the beginning of both world wars. The failures of the World War I programs led to the success and scale of the World War II defense housing program, which also wiped away the gains in construction quality and the community building efforts that housing reformers had developed in the years between the wars.

World War I

In 1918, American wartime industries failed to produce at peak efficiency because of instabilities in the labor market. The federal government lifted restrictions on housing developers working to expedite the production of housing in areas of rapid wartime growth. While the increased access to construction supplies benefited needy communities and stimulated new housing construction, suspending rules that mandated union wages at construction sites contributed to lasting weaknesses in the construction labor market beyond the era of housing crisis. The perpetual inability of

industrial centers to retain workers can be attributed to the insufficient supply and high cost of housing around shipbuilding centers. Single men were off fighting for war, depleting the pool of available domestic laborers, so factory owners needed to entice older men and women with families to work in the war production machine. The two enticements were high wages and affordable housing. To address the national shortage of housing for migrants to wartime industry clusters, the federal government planned to build approximately eighty suburban or village-type housing projects between July and November 1918, under the direction of two agencies, U.S. Housing Corporation (USHC) and the U.S. Shipping Board Emergency Fleet Corporation (EFC). The federal effort produced a limited number of charming communities with curving roads, public spaces, and rear alleys. In total, the USHC built twenty-seven new communities “consisting of nearly 6,000 single family homes and 7,000 apartments, in 16 states and the District of Columbia.”¹ The EFC was not a direct building agency; it made loans that assisted in the construction of “28 projects in 23 cities, including more than 8,000 homes and 800 apartment units owned by realty companies.”² Strongly influenced by the English town planner Ebenezer Howard, these Garden City–style buildings were all intended to appear as if each multi-family dwelling were a detached, single-family structure. The quality of design and aesthetic details on the dwellings themselves, such as Flemish bond brickwork, mullions, and quaint shutters, were all intended to blend into the existing residential communities of the region. These projects were very slow to construct, and the war ended before the program could make a real contribution to alleviate overcrowding. After the war the federal

government withdrew from housing construction perceiving that the need had passed. All USHC housing (and any EFC housing that had been acquired through foreclosure) was privatized starting in 1921, although the USHC operated until 1930.³

An example of this housing is Yorkship Village in Camden, New Jersey. Looking at the site plan from 1918 (figure 3-1), one can see the vision of a very attractive community. The multi-family dwellings, the play space, the community buildings, and the central common area are all very traditional, and the axis and the curved edges are a bit of an embellishment. In figure 3-2, the scale of the Model T Ford on the far left shows that the streets are very broad.

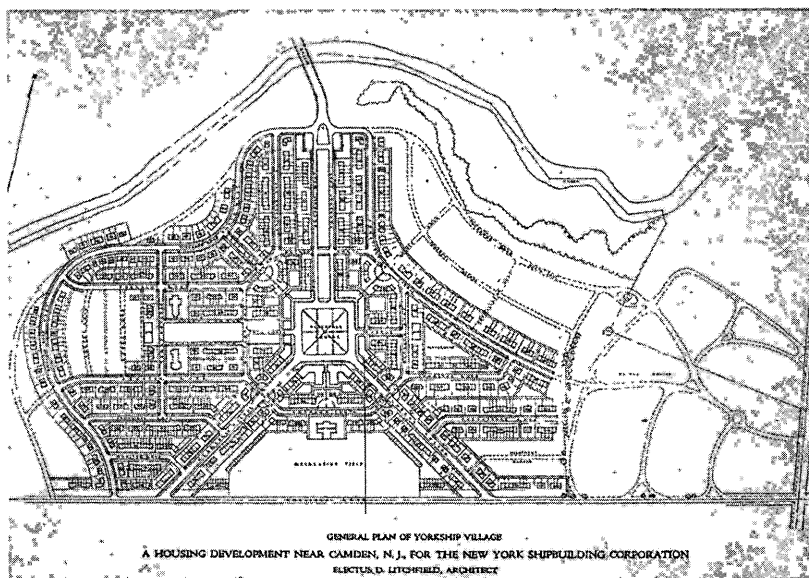


Figure 3-1. (site plan) General Plan of Yorkship Village c. 1903, a 225-acre hamlet near Camden, New Jersey. Courtesy of Frances Loeb Library, Graduate School of Design, Harvard University (3.2002.2041.2).



Figure 3-2. (photo) Streetscape c. 1918, Yorkship Village was the first federally funded planned community, designed by Electus D. Litchfield. World War I worker housing near Camden, New Jersey. Courtesy of Frances Loeb Library, Graduate School of Design, Harvard University (#118550).

Despite the multiple entrances, each apartment building is skillfully proportioned and placed to appear to the pedestrian on the street as a grand single residence. Because each structure fills its lot and leaves little open space around the dwelling units, large open spaces are included in the plan at key locations in the common areas. Another interesting detail in figure 3-2 is the power lines, demonstrating that government-financed World War I worker housing was electrified.

New Deal Housing Programs, 1933–1940

A number of housing construction programs emerged under the National Industrial Recovery Act (NIRA). Each of these offered an experimental approach to resolve housing issues including affordability, health, and blight elimination. The Public Works Administration (PWA) housing program was one of the most lasting programs to arise out of the NIRA, although public housing evolved dramatically from

its New Deal roots. The Farm Security Administration (FSA; formerly the Resettlement Administration) managed a number of housing programs that are discussed in this chapter; the design of Greenbelt Towns (a New Deal program to provide construction work as well as homeownership for struggling families) was more successful than the other efforts of the FSA. Privatizing units once the perceived crisis was mitigated became one of the main tools the federal government used after World War II to manage its massive defense housing portfolio. Interestingly, the original fifty-two PWA developments were never privatized and those still standing continued to operate as public housing communities.

Public Works Administration Reform Housing Program

The unpretentious appearance of the housing developments created by the PWA belies their historical and architectural importance. Between July 1933 and March 1939, the PWA built 34,000 projects, ranging from airports to sewage treatment facilities. The PWA program failed to deliver as much housing as President Roosevelt had hoped for, with only 25,000 units produced in its four and a half years. Many high-density slum housing developments were demolished to make room for the new public housing units. Those 25,000 units (22,000 new units and 3,000 rehabilitated units) do not represent the net increase in housing units. Since many of these projects acquired land through slum clearance, which razed 10,000 units the net increase in housing units was 12,000 units. World War II became the economic generator that the New Deal had hoped to be, and the PWA was abolished in June

1941; many of the New Deal programs were no longer essential because their main goal was job creation, a crisis solved as the country geared up to be a key manufacturing center for the defense industry. Oddly enough, Bonneville Dam, constructed on the Columbia River in 1937, was the PWA's most significant contribution to the future of public housing in Oregon, since there were no PWA housing units built in the state. The dam can be attributed to the region's ability to create jobs. The dam generated the affordable energy needed to supply the shipyards in Portland and Vancouver, and the construction of "Liberty ships" and other defense industrial output created job opportunities which attracted the workers who in turn needed housing for their families.

The first efforts by the PWA were to finance private development of housing, projects that had lost bank financing as a result of the economic crash, these projects already had acquired land and had architectural designs, contractors were ready to break ground as soon as financing was provided thus allowing the PWA to start constructing housing units immediately. This developments lacked the modern design innovations that denote PWA housing and its reform housing mission. These limited-dividend efforts only produced eight developments at which point PWA was ready to produce their own independent public housing developments. Eventually, the successful marketing of the concept of federal direct construction projects assisted local housing authorities to build residential developments independently, a practice first augmented by loans and grants from the PWA's Housing Division with the money generated from the rent rolls at PWA developments. The fifty-two direct-built

PWA housing projects ranged in size from thirty units in Bassin Triangle on St. Croix, Virgin Islands, to 1,622 in Williamsburg, in Brooklyn. These structures, in thirty-five different cities, were bold innovations in planning, slum clearance, and technological adaptations. The demise of the PWA in this decade can be attributed to their low density, which made the sites attractive to developers, and federal policy shifts at Housing and Urban Development (HUD), deferring maintenance and redirected funds to programs like HOPE VI.

In no phase did the PWA, or any other New Deal construction program, focus solely on creating housing. Perry Fellows, an assistant engineer of the Works Progress Administration (WPA), like many other government officials, did not see the New Deal as anything but a program to increase employment. The construction of low-income housing and the participation of various New Deal programs in solving the housing problem were temporary initiatives and experiments, not part of a mandate to solve housing problems. “It is not to be expected that these projects will be the precursors of an active and continuing housing program.”⁴

One good this Depression-era program did was provide design templates for quality units that were cognizant of health, morality⁵, and fire safety, to be implemented broadly once the economy recovered. The new well-lit units with modern plumbing would replace overcrowded urban tenements and provide residents with a sense of privacy and security in a crowded, unsafe city. Because the economic depression was international in scope, federal housing programs were able to retain world-renowned architects to work in concert with a number of top social workers,

planners, and artists. The Branch of Plans and Specifications was created by the Housing Division of the PWA to centralize control and assist local architects and engineers by providing guidelines for building orientations, site plans, room arrangements, and unit divisions. Architects formed informal consortiums to distribute the limited design work, enabling New Deal designs to include input from various individuals not necessarily from the same architectural firm.⁶ The designs established during the PWA direct building program fulfilled the goals of the Progressive movement: safe, fireproof apartments for working families that incorporated individual bathrooms, one or more windows in every room, running hot water, communal modern laundry equipment, and access to community facilities and abundant open spaces. Reformers hoped that these models would inspire better designs and lower the cost of designing multiple-dwelling units by the private market.

In the 1930s, public housing complexes were built for the middle class. In an era of unprecedented unemployment, the working poor often came from the middle class. From March 1934 until September 1937, the PWA Housing Division laid the groundwork for the construction of fifty-two model, low-rent housing projects. M. Christine Boyer states that the Housing Division of PWA was the most controversial aspect of the program. She wrote, "To meet the obligation of housing projects, critics complained, cities were saddling themselves with unprecedented maintenance and operating debts."⁷ Nevertheless, these buildings recall a time of distinct optimism amid an economic crisis.

The first public housing project opened in August 1936. Techwood Homes in Atlanta, Georgia, featured a modified Georgian design by architect Flip Burge (see figure 3-3).



Figure 3-3. (photo) A few of the dwelling units at Techwood Homes, Atlanta, Georgia, prior to their demolition in 1996. Building Number 16, 488-514 Techwood Drive, these homes were the first federally funded demonstration public housing project to start construction. Courtesy of Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Historic American Buildings Survey or Historic American Engineering Record (HABS GA,61-ATLA,60S-).

These two- and three-story apartments with copper canopy awnings are humanized by the photographer's choice to frame the dwelling with an older tree. Notice that the buildings are of brick, the typical fireproof material used in these projects. Techwood Homes was a slum clearance project that replaced 1,611 families of diverse backgrounds with 604 white families (see figure 3-4). Interestingly, when it was first completed, it was a standard for public housing. The development's racial occupancy also followed the national pattern: the first African American families moved in 1968 as civil rights pushed to integrate federal housing projects, and within

six years of integration the development had a majority minority population. All the units had bathtubs and electric ranges, many dwellings had garages, and the community could boast six stores, a kindergarten, and a library. The expanded site became a ghetto once again and in the 1970s and the structures were eventually demolished to make way for the 1996 Summer Olympics.



Figure 3-4. (photo) Housing in the slum in Atlanta, Georgia, before the construction of Techwood Homes, in 1934. The earliest federal PWA housing slum clearance project. Courtesy of FDR Presidential Archives 27-0937a.

Children's equipment was limited at all the PWA direct-built developments. The Jane Addams Homes (see figure 3-5) mixed the art with the playground. This playground was inspired by efforts of reformers to get children to stop playing unsupervised in the street by including playgrounds in public housing. The first public playground dedicated for youth recreation built in the nation broke ground in 1887, part of the larger Golden Gate Park project in San Francisco, California. Children's play areas within neighborhoods continued to be a rarity; the first public housing project to have a play space for children was at First Houses in New York, which

opened in 1935. For decades, playgrounds within public housing were intended to be public parks for neighborhood residents, not just for residents within the public housing complexes. Units in the Jane Addams Homes came with electric refrigerators bought from Westinghouse.⁸ Like all three PWA developments built in Chicago between 1935 and 1937, they were segregated; all 2,414 units were exclusively white when first occupied.



Figure 3-5. (photo) Children playing among Animal Court statues by Treasury Relief Arts Project employee artist Edger Miller c. 1938, Jane Addams Homes, Chicago. Only one structure remains at the site, 1322–1324 W. Taylor St., which is projected to house a public housing museum in 2012. Courtesy of Library of Congress.

One-third of the units built by the PWA housed African Americans exclusively; often African American architects were retained as members of the design teams. For these African American professionals it was their first opportunity to design more than mechanical specification. Harlem River Houses in New York City, a nine-acre PWA housing project built for African Americans on vacant land (see figure

3-6), was such a case: the chief architect on the design team was Archibald Manning and the multi cultural team of architects were Horace Ginsbern, Charles C. Fuller, John Louis Wilson Jr., Frank J. Forester, Will Rice Amon, and Richard W. Buckley.⁹ African American artists were also hired by the WPA to create statues like the one in the photo.



Figure 3-6. (photo) Two children admiring WPA sculpture at Harlem River Houses, 7th Ave. and 151st., New York City, December 1940. Exterior VII. Gottscho-Schleisner, Inc. Courtesy of the Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Gottscho-Schleisner Collection (LC-CG12-T-39009).

The main distinction between African American and white PWA developments was that African American projects typically lacked basements and laundry facilities. Interestingly, the modern designs did not use the most modern construction technologies available at the time. The PWA was keen on employing as many architects, artists, contractors and laborers as possible, so its buildings had flat roofs yet under these modern skins (veneers) the bones (interior systems) of the buildings

consisted of traditional framing, windows systems, foundations, and lath-and-plaster walls. Labor saving technologies like sheetrock had been developed but were shunned, regional and traditional construction practices that might increase labor hours were encouraged as well as added artistic adornments to facades that were purely aesthetic. A key function of the program was to employ as many individuals as possible from the construction industry, the economic sector hardest hit by the Depression.

None of these sturdy PWA developments were west of the Mississippi River; most were built in four states: New York, Illinois, Ohio, and Georgia. The developments offered the public efficient, sound structures, built to last and requiring minimal maintenance. The only housing provided by the PWA west of the Mississippi was temporary: prefabricated transient housing for agricultural workers.

Despite the PWA's noble vision of model housing, the driving force behind direct government construction of housing was to create jobs. Animosity between advocates of affordable public housing and their antagonists made the survival of the PWA program unlikely from its conception. The Housing Division's fate would eventually hinge on party politics and on the controversial slum clearance element.¹⁰ In order to promote the construction of significant numbers of affordable housing units, the government needed to intervene at all stages of the development, production, and management of housing. Overcrowding in city slums heightened as the Depression progressed and the unemployed and residents of Dust Bowl states migrated into the cities, hoping to obtain federal employment. The stringent standards

of the PWA's Housing Division made the program cumbersome. Local architects, working under Housing Division supervision, were free to incorporate regional styles as they saw fit. The PWA Housing Division was the foundation for the public housing programs that are still managed by local and regional housing authorities today.

Greenbelt Towns

Three Greenbelt Towns broke ground in the 1930s: Greenbelt, Maryland; Greenhills, Ohio; and Greendale, Wisconsin. All were innovative examples of community/town planning for the working class. The federal government was involved in every detail from site selection to management, unlike many other federal programs that absorbed failed private-market visions. The program was constructed and administered by the Resettlement Administration (later called the Farm Security Administration), the New Deal's rural antipoverty agency, and was characterized by a very high degree of federal oversight.¹¹ These town designs were inspired by private efforts to design communities for the upper-middle class before the stock market crash of 1929. Among them are Sunnyside Gardens in Queens, New York (1924–1929); Radburn, New Jersey (1929); and Roland Park in Baltimore, Maryland (1890–1920).

The most notable Greenbelt Town is the eponymous Greenbelt, MD, planned for 4,000 families and built in 1937. It had 885 detached homes arranged in a series of residential clusters joined by interior walkways that led to community and business facilities. The architects of the apartments and communal buildings were influenced by the International Style. The community was designed for families of modest means

to live within a place that would promote civic engagement. The initial rent was \$31 a month.¹² The development included a modest school that was also used by residents for public gatherings and housed the community library (see figure 3-7). It operated as a school and community center until 1999. Note the well-maintained WPA relief art under each window, as well as a recent restoration of the building as a community center.

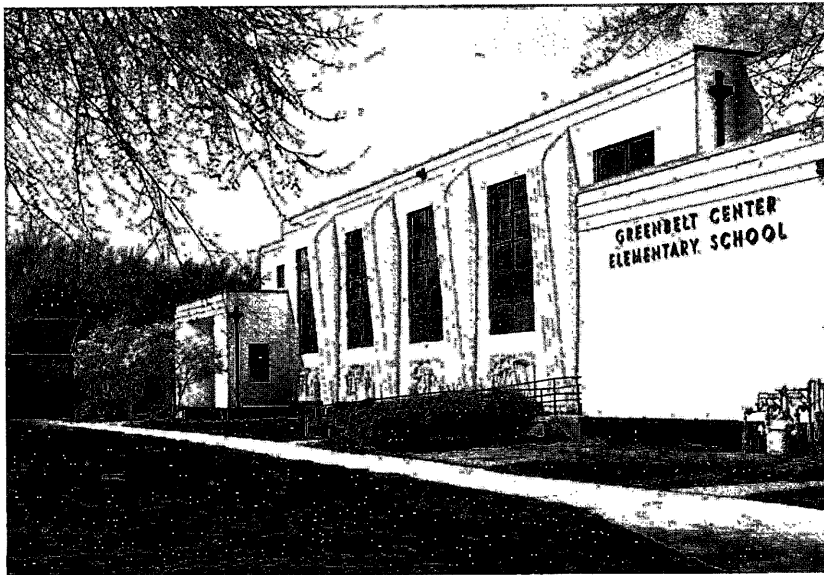


Figure 3-7. (photo) Greenbelt Center Elementary School, in Greenbelt, Maryland photographer Jack Boucher March 1989. Courtesy of Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Historic American Buildings Survey or Historic American Engineering Record (view from southeast, md,17-grblt,1-4).

The federal government maintained ownership of the properties in Greenbelt until the formation of community cooperatives (predating homeowners' associations), which allowed for privatization of all the communities between 1952 and 1954. According to a program produced by Columbia University's Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation:

The most prominent professional planners of the day were enlisted in the Greentowns project. The Mclean Mansion in Washington became the headquarters for their collaborative work. Among those planners convening at the Mclean Mansion were Henry Wright, Albert Mayer, Justin Hartzog, Roland Wank, Jacob Crane, Elbert Peets, Tracy Augur, Catherine Bauer, Russell Black, Earle S. Draper, J. Andre Fouilhoux, and Clarence Stein. Of the 25 potential sites, 4 were finally chosen for development and assigned chief planners. Two of the four were planned for the east coast. Greenbelt near Washington, Greenbrook near New Brunswick [never built], Greenhills near Cincinnati and Greendale near Milwaukee.¹³

One of the interesting site design features of the Greenbelt Towns was the separation of pedestrian and vehicular traffic. Unlike the public housing units of that era built without any parking spaces, Greenbelt Town planners envisioned car ownership for middle-class suburbanites.

The national press criticized residents as being docile citizens of a regimented or communistic community. After the war, many civil service employees in Greenbelt, Maryland, actually lost their jobs.¹⁴ And though the government did embrace the idea for a time, in the face of cost overruns and a conservative Congress that regarded the projects as “pink,” the Greenbelt Towns were never supported as a model for postwar suburbia. Their innovative, pedestrian-friendly yet pro-car designs were forgotten by the crabgrass frontier of the 1950s.

Subsistence Homesteads Program

The Farm Security Administration’s Subsistence Homesteads Program was designed to help urban, poverty-stricken families by relocating them to small farms. It strived to create self-sufficient subsistence homesteads to resolve two dominant

twentieth-century Progressive-era themes: the humanization of industry and the creation of model housing. The program's experimental farm colonies were all in rural communities such as Artherdale, West Virginia, and Hightstown, New Jersey.¹⁵ Membership required sweat equity and an initial fee of \$500, which gave urban residents the opportunity for rural homeownership as well as a share of the profits from the collective factory and farm. A cohesive holistic community was built and created under the guidance of the FSA.

Jersey Homesteads, built in 1936, in western Monmouth County, New Jersey, was conceived as an agricultural-industrial cooperative community for Jewish garment workers and their families living in Bronx tenements. Its architects were Louis J. Kahn and Alfred Kastner. Kastner had participated in the first phase of the PWA limited-dividend projects as one of the designers of Carl Mackley Houses, union housing complete with a swimming pool and balconies, one of seven projects that were unfinished under the Hoover administration. Hoover had passed the Davis-Bacon Act in 1931, which required all federal construction projects to pay prevailing union wages to workers, even though there was no requirement to hire union workers. The PWA limited-dividend housing program was responsible for financing eight housing developments that had struggled because they were public private partnerships. Often, these were projects that had lost their funding as banks failed and were not visionary designs; they were simply preexisting projects that were repackaged. Together, they created 250 Bauhaus-style cinder-block houses adjacent to a 414-acre farm, with dairy

and poultry facilities, garment factory, community building, library, stores and teashop.¹⁶

Figure 3-8 shows the affordable, pre-fabricated construction using cinder blocks (hollow-core blocks made of Portland cement, water, and cinders left over from burned coal). Although these dwellings apparently have no basements, they were on large plots of land and easily accommodated additions. Cement was not used for housing construction during the Defense era, despite its affordability and technical experimentations during the New Deal, because it was needed for the war effort. Very few of these homes maintain their original modernist flat rooflines, and most are unrecognizable underneath years of augmentation. The PWA Housing Division had been clearing twenty-eight urban ghettos,¹⁷ part of slum clearance to fix the city, which was quite a contrast to this contemporary FSA subsistence program which was solving the ills of the city by relocating city dwellers into a model rural townships.



Figure 3-8. (photo) Construction of modernist housing of Jersey Homesteads, a utopian experiment, Hightstown, NJ, November 1936. The community is now part of Roosevelt, NJ. Architects retained were Louis J. Kahn and Alfred Kastner. Photographer Russell Lee. Courtesy Library of Congress Prints & Photographs Division, FSA-OWI Collection (LC-USF33-011030-M5 DLC).

Of all these New Deal housing programs, only one west of the Mississippi: Longview Homestead in Longview, Washington was permanent. The only homestead project built in the Northwest, its sixty homes were completed in 1935 and administered by the Resettlement Administration.¹⁸ The homes, just like those in the Jersey Homestead, came with a poultry-shed and garage. Unlike the New Yorkers who were to be employed in the garment and farming industries, however, these families in Washington were expected to maintain their industrial jobs in wood processing plants. Figure 3-9 shows Longview homes made of wood with simple, lightweight balloon framing—quite a contrast to the cinder block homes in Figure 3-8. Interestingly, ignoring the idyllic pastoral image of the two boys alongside the creek, Longview Homestead look more like the housing in the slum clearance site in Atlanta (figure 3-4) than any of the other contemporary New Deal projects discussed in this chapter. Like the public housing units were built in Portland eight years later, units like the homes in Longview, Washington, used the readily available timber of the region.



Figure 3-9. (photo) Two young residents of Longview Homestead sitting by the river that runs alongside the newly constructed homes along Oak Street, in Longview, Washington, July 1936. Negative by Arthur Rothstein, Resettlement Administration. Courtesy of the National Archives (LC-DIG-fsa-8b27975 DLC).

United States Housing Authority, 1937–1942

The United States Housing Authority (USHA) was created in 1937 as part of the New Deal and absorbed the management of the PWA housing program. The USHA lasted five years but the policies of this agency legitimized legislation and public policy regarding public housing for decades. After the Great Depression, the idea of a public housing program for the middle class dimmed, and community housing programs such as Greenbelt Towns and Subsistence Homesteads failed to take root. Instead, the most pervasive and lasting program of that era was a finance program that insured private mortgages.

Prior to the defense housing program and Vanport, four massive, high-density projects were built to last: Ida B. Wells Homes in Chicago with 1,662 units, Allequippa Terrace in Pittsburgh with 1,851 units, and Red Hook Houses and Queensbridge Houses—enormous projects still in use as public housing—in New York City with 2,545 and 3,148 units, respectively.

Ida B. Wells Homes, built in 1941 (see figure 3-10), was the last USHA development constructed, and its tenants were the envy of their peers on the South Side. Unlike the three PWA housing projects in Chicago built exclusively for whites (Jane Addams Houses, Trumbull Park Homes and Julia C. Lathrop Homes), this development was segregated for African Americans. It had 868 apartments and 794 row houses, and was the first housing project in the United States to include a city

park within its boundaries.¹⁹ In this photo, taken soon after the project opened, it is easy to imagine that these eight young children are being escorted to the park.



Figure 3-10. (photo) Ida B. Wells Homes in Chicago, Illinois, 1942.
Courtesy Library of Congress Prints & Photographs Division,
FSA-OWI Collection LC-USW3-000627-D.

The PWA housing projects were transformed into affordable housing units as the initial occupants returned to private-market housing; PWA developments in the planning and land acquisition phase were streamlined by the new USHA housing agency to be built more economically with smaller units and fewer community features to produce affordable housing communities for residents with strict income restrictions. The Greenbelt Town programs for the most part were left unfinished and any federal land holdings and structures remaining were slated to be privatized, a process completed by 1954. The federal housing program was increasingly decentralized through the rise of local housing authorities to administer construction and management of public housing developments.

The United States Housing Authority (USHA) was designed to lend money to states and communities for low-cost construction. Localizing public housing

development gave the program a wider range of political support. The new affordable housing program under USHA standards required higher-density developments than those built under the PWA, although building prototypes were replicated. “In effect, the USHA was more powerful than the earlier PWA. Although it required administration of its program through local agencies, the USHA retained the power to intervene in the formation and staffing of local authorities and to control both funding and design ideology.”²⁰

Nathan Straus, the USHA administrator, hired Catherine Bauer to manage grants. The staff of the USHA worked in concert with the staff of local housing authorities to replace substandard housing units with innovative public housing units. Yet despite land acquisition hurdles and the new decentralized system, by 1942, the USHA had funded a substantial portfolio of 100,000 new housing units in 370 developments. The majority of these sites were slum clearance projects that replaced 70,000 pre-existing, blighted housing units.²¹ The legacy of the USHA is tarnished by the institutionalization of racial segregation in public housing; the positive outcomes of enhancing community identity and the creation of tenant councils within public housing are forgotten.

Portland Housing Needs, 1911–1964

World War I Housing Crunch in Portland, 1911–1914

The need for family housing during World War I has eerie similarities to the housing crisis during World War II, and the failure of federal government to respond rapidly to World War I housing needs helped motivate the massive construction of public housing units in the 1940s. The struggle between reformers and major real estate interests to implement zoning practices emerged nationally before World War I. Real estate interests feared that single-family zoning might limit the profit potential of apartments on their landholdings. Portland's first zoning code was codified in 1924. This struggle to balance the public good with private interests was exacerbated by the 30,000 migrants working in the Portland shipyards during World War I. The vacancy rate was extremely low; particularly critical was the lack of dwelling units suitable for families. The thousands of laborers working in three shifts at Portland's ten shipyards had transformed the city from a laidback mercantile hub into a twenty-four-hour town.²² Mayor George Luis Baker (who served from 1917 to 1933) was proud of his war bond drives, recycling programs, and treatment of soldiers, but feared that unless more housing was built the city would have to start turning away federal war production contracts.²³ Mayor Baker, an Oregon native with almost no schooling, was elected mayor seven weeks into World War I, after a career as a live theater owner with intermittent terms on the Portland city council. His efforts to work with the federal Emergency Fleet Corporation (EFC) failed despite the issuance of permits, because the war ended prior to breaking ground.

A local reform group, the Portland Housing Association (PHA; formed in 1913 as the Housing Committee of Consumers League), came into its own once World War I shipbuilding created a housing crunch.²⁴ The organization was concerned about Portland's poor residents and began inspecting hundreds of structures in 1918 in order to document slum conditions. Historian Adam Hodges credits the report derived from the work of 3,000 volunteers functioning under the guidance of the United States Housing Corporation as the impetus behind new building codes. They were intended to prevent the construction of dwellings with insufficient windows for light and air and to mandate designs that would provide hygienic plumbing and more modern fire protection.²⁵ The difficulty that cities experienced in launching housing programs on the scale needed for World War I and the federal experiments of the Great Depression created the motivation and experience to ensure that in the next national emergency—World War II—Portland's shipyards received a massive share of assistance from federal housing programs.

Overview of the African American Experience in Portland's Housing Market

In the mid- to late 1800s, African Americans were effectively blocked from living in Oregon. Unable to acquire land by homesteading and persecuted in Portland and Oregon City by the Black Exclusion Law of 1849, they settled in Washington Territory (later, State). The African Americans who moved to Portland from 1890 to 1910 clustered around the train yards at Union Depot (now Union Station) because the railroads had hired many of them as redcaps and Pullman porters. At that time the

majority of the state's African Americans lived in downtown Portland. One community institution, the Golden West Hotel on the corner of NW Everett and Broadway, was a successful community gathering spot and the one African American hotel friendly to railroad men.²⁶ William D. Allan ran the hotel at 717 NW Everett St. from 1906 to 1931, filling a need for accommodations as well as providing a secure location for minority-owned businesses on the ground floor, such as a barbershop, a soda fountain, a gymnasium, and Turkish baths.²⁷

Within the decade, a second cluster emerged within the Albina district, near the train yards and adjacent industrial areas. "By the end of the 1930s, more than half of the city's 2,000 African Americans lived in Albina, where inexpensive older housing allowed for widespread homeownership among stable working class families and a few business and professional families."²⁸ According to historian Rudy Pearson, African Americans clustered in Albina because it was the only district where they could acquire business permits,²⁹ though they were not always forced into compartmentalized locations until the 1940s war production migration.³⁰ Some individuals overcame the challenges they faced as a result of housing and job discrimination. Before World War II, African American households in Portland were scattered throughout the city, despite deed restrictions and other discrimination, likely because there were so few in number that they were not perceived as a threat by the dominant white culture once they had established neighborhood ties to white residents. Although African Americans had received suffrage and legal standing in Oregon in 1925, Oregon's lateness in complying with the 14th and 15th Amendments of the U.S.

Constitution exposed the state's anti-African American sentiment and strong resistance to African Americans' rights. In 1940, the African American population comprised only 0.6 percent of the total city population.³¹

Albina and East Portland consolidated with Portland in 1891, and Albina's retail corridor was in decline as a result.³² The Realty Board's policy had already been implemented with less discernable boundaries since 1900, with increasing transparency as the African American population grew in the city. The Portland Realty Board openly practiced a racially exclusionary policy starting in 1919; the organization reported to the *Oregon Journal* that no home sales to non-whites would be permitted in white residential districts.³³ In 1945, the membership of the Realty Board singled out "Albina for Negroes and Ladd's Addition for Orientals".³⁴

Dr. DeNorval Unthank, a African American physician, civil rights advocate, and highly respected leader in the African American community, became an "urban pioneer" in 1930 by moving with his family into Ladd's Addition³⁵, where the family "encountered every type of opposition, from signed petitions and protest visits to property vandalism."³⁶ The family had to move four times before the frightened property owners' protests subsided. This negative reaction to an African American household that crossed the color line was not an isolated event; it was occurring nationwide. Thomas Sugrue in *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* documented how white residents in Detroit created invisible boundaries. They took on various roles to protest the integration of their neighborhoods, with women and children picketing by day, and men and teenagers

attacking by night.³⁷ Because African Americans had purchased homes in Ladd's Addition, white real estate agents perceived the area as less desirable for marketing to their white clients.

The squeeze started in 1942 when African Americans, migrating primarily from the South, arrived in "threatening" numbers, seeking work in the three Portland-area Kaiser Shipyards and local steel mills.³⁸ The roughly 15,000 African Americans who migrated to Portland mostly came from "Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, and Texas."³⁹ Many workers had no option but to move into the segregated public housing units at Vanport, Guild's Lake Courts, and Fairview Homes. The private market offered few ownership opportunities for the city's expanding African American population. In a 1993 report, Portland's Bureau of Planning stated:

In 1945 the only housing, outside the Federal housing projects, open to blacks was located in a segregated and concentrated area bounded by NE Holladay, North and NE Russell, NE Union and the Willamette River. Real estate agents were bound by a code of ethics established by the Realty Board in 1919 that made them subject to dismissal if they sold outside the prescribed area. Land values in the central Albina were high because it had always been targeted for light industrial and commercial activities. No mortgage firms were found to be interested in soliciting or financing loans to Negroes for building.⁴⁰

Giving these discriminatory practices, it is not surprising that public housing had an increasing African American population.

Creation of a Housing Authority: Portland Lags behind the Nation

In the early 1930s, real estate agents, apartment owners, and mortgage banking interests opposed the creation of a public housing authority in Portland, despite a rise

in homelessness and the formation of shantytowns during the Great Depression. Planning by the city government was very top-down and catered to the concerns of the upper class. In October 1940, the federal government passed the National Defense Housing Act, also known as the Lanham Act. This established a Defense Housing Program, with a budget of \$150 million, to construct three types of housing for war workers: permanent houses, temporary houses,⁴¹ and trailers. The Defense Housing Program was to be operated by local housing authorities, created under New Deal legislation, in cities where defense industries had difficulty attracting and retaining workers because of congested private housing markets. Once again just as the city had thwarted housing in World War I, Portland chose not to create a public housing program that would have drawn federal dollars into the region, despite the dire need for dwelling units.

In 1941, Portland was one of the largest cities without a housing authority, at a time when 500 housing authorities had been authorized nationally. By the time Portland chartered the Housing Authority of Portland (HAP), every other major city on the West Coast had already created one. Even the small city bordering on Portland of Milwaukie, Oregon, had federal funding for its first housing project, Kellogg Park, in May 1941. However, once Kellogg Park was finished the next year, the housing authority determined that it would be exclusively for white occupation.

HAP emerged within a week of the attack on Pearl Harbor December 7, 1941; the threat of foreign invasion had swung the vote. For its first four years, HAP was dominated by Chester A. Moores, a real estate investor who had vociferously opposed

creating a housing authority.⁴² Mayor Earl Riley, who had led the effort to create the Housing Authority of Portland (HAP), stated that he had done so “to protect the city from the action of federal ‘carpetbaggers’.”⁴³ HAP was finally established in December 1941, and, within two years, enough public housing was produced at twenty-five sites to provide for 40,000 defense workers and their families. The Portland-Vancouver metro region ultimately became one of the most active defense industry centers in the nation, and, ironically, by 1944 the Portland area had more public housing units than any other city in the United States. New York City Housing Authority, the second largest operator of public housing in 1944, during World War II was operating a portfolio of 13,173 units, when HAP was operating a larger portfolio of 18,504 units. Later, in the spirit of its original resistance, the city worked feverishly—with some help from Mother Nature—to dismantle its program as soon as the war was over.

Vanport and Guild’s Lake Courts, 1942–1948

In the six decades since the 1948 Vanport Flood, there has been much written about Vanport, the city that Henry Kaiser built and nature destroyed, at record speeds. The destruction narrative has been linked most recently to the flooding caused by Hurricane Katrina in 2005. The quote below is not from a scholarly source; nevertheless, it is valuable to note that even the anonymously written but popular online encyclopedia Wikipedia links these two disasters:

The Vanport Flood parallels the more recent Hurricane Katrina disaster in New Orleans. In both cases, public officials led the population to believe that the damage would be slight, and in both cases the government response to the disaster was harshly criticized. Many have attributed the poor response, in both cases, to racist attitudes on the part of officials, who allegedly neglected to respond appropriately to the destruction of heavily-black communities.⁴⁴

September 16, 2005, Oregon Public Broadcasting aired a TV show comparing the Vanport Flood's effect on Portland and Hurricane Katrina's effect on New Orleans. The commentators dealt with their similarities in race relations, but also focused on the efforts to rebuild after Katrina, something that did not happen at Vanport. The key difference in these two cataclysmic floods' impacts on their respective cities is that in New Orleans the flood decimated neighborhoods with historic legacies and homeownership whereas the community destroyed at Vanport was relatively new, transitional, and had no homeownership. The media are not alone in connecting the flood narratives; scholars are also looking at these linkages.⁴⁵ Yet none of these re-examinations of the Vanport Flood have explored the experience of Guild's Lake Courts, even as an evacuee center for flood victims.⁴⁶

In recalling the fate of Vanport, Portland's collective memory has formed the tragic tale of a utopian vision lost to the brutal forces of nature, racism, and politics. One such approach, presented by Dolores Hayden in her book, *Redesigning the American Dream*, uses Vanport as a model for feminist housing. Hayden never touches on the white/African American bifurcation of the site in her recounting of its architecture, lifestyle, and public support systems. The fact that the 1948 flood affected Vanport's African American residents disproportionately has been

acknowledged by historians, but, until recently, the history of housing segregation in Portland's other public housing projects has been overlooked.

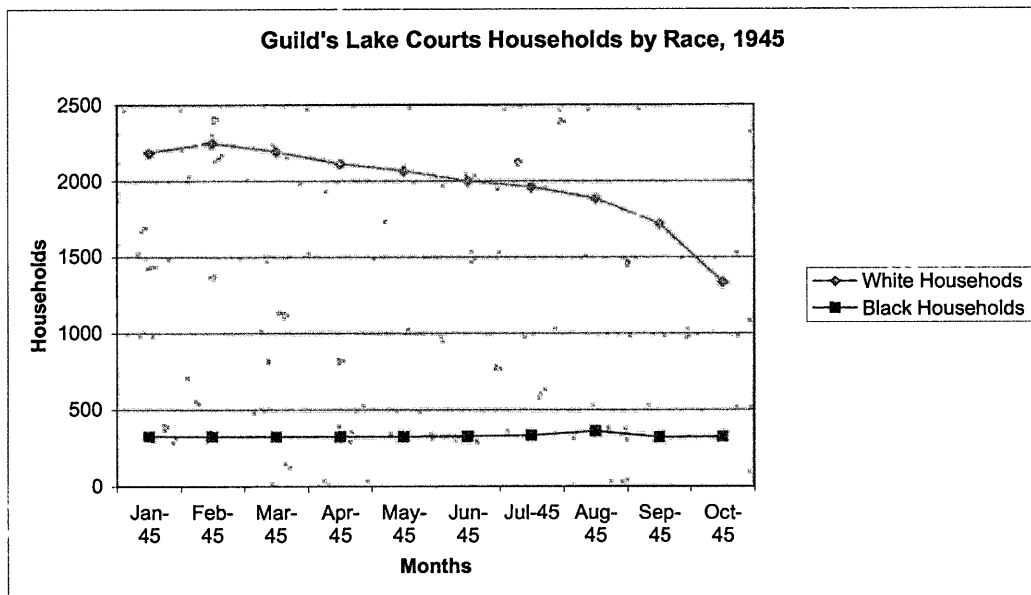
Vanport and Guild's Lake Courts were built simultaneously under the same construction material rationing and, for all but the initial units at Guild's Lake Courts, with the same type of temporary designs and build-out calculations. The story of these two housing developments are interlinked because they were the only defense communities in Oregon to allow African American residents and because there was a flow of both white and African American residents between the two developments. Trains arriving in Union Station earned the nickname "Kaiser Specials" because cars were packed with job-seeking migrants coming to the region in response to Kaiser Corporation's help-wanted posters. Portland received 72,000 migrants, many of whom came on these special transcontinental trains.⁴⁷ The Kaiser Corporation is sometimes identified as the contractor for the vast majority of temporary public housing units, including the segregated housing facilities of both Vanport and Guild's Lake Courts, when in fact the contractors for Guild's Lake Courts were local (see Table 4-1).⁴⁸ Kaiser built Vanport outside the city limits of Portland to avoid the opposing forces on the board of HAP. The apparent revisionist history on HAP's website states that Vanport was initially planned and begun by the United States Maritime Commission and Kaiser Corporation because Congress had yet to make public housing funds available.⁴⁹ These developments were placed strategically to keep African Americans away from white residential neighborhoods. Rudy Person

points out that African Americans were “safely” tucked away from whites and, for all intents and purposes, stranded in public housing.⁵⁰

Kaiser recognized the negative impact that race relations would have on production; he encouraged African Americans to work in the Vancouver, Washington, shipyards because the unions in Vancouver had a history of racial tolerance that did not exist in Portland. After the war, city housing authorities, including the one in Vancouver, integrated their remaining public housing portfolios.⁵¹ Kaiser was spearheading a movement with the support of the National Committee on Housing, an organization that, in 1945, presented draft plans to rebuild permanent housing for 12,500 people at the Vanport site.⁵² The strongest opposition came from Chester A. Moores, still the chair of the HAP board in 1945, who wanted Vanport and Guild’s Lake Courts turned into industrial parks. The argument raged on in full heat for three years, only to have the visions of both men for Vanport wiped out in 1948 by a single catastrophic event.

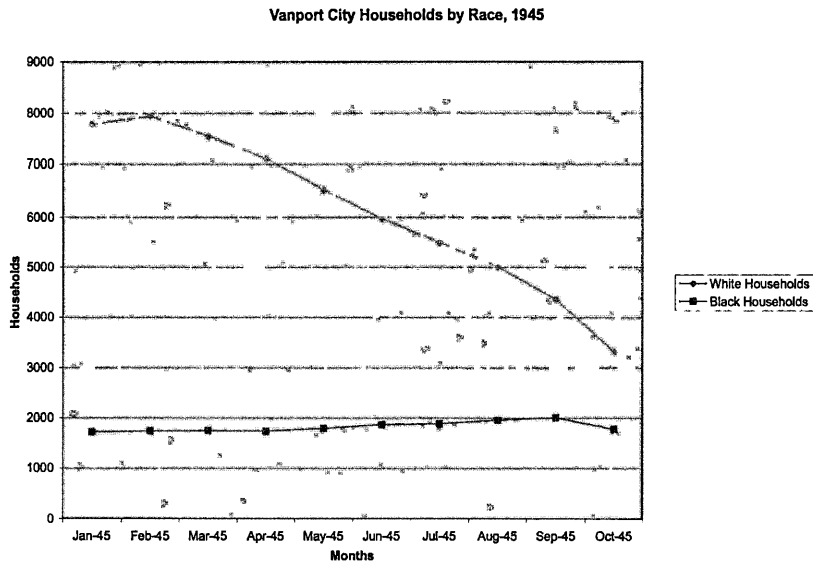
During the war, at the peak of population in defense housing, there were 6,317 African Americans living in Vanport⁵³ and nearly 2,000 in Guild’s Lake Courts (MacColl’s figure of 5,000 appears to be inflated.⁵⁴ Over 50 percent of the total population of African Americans in Oregon lived in public housing. After the war, as whites relocated out of these projects more rapidly, African Americans became an increasing percentage of the public housing population.⁵⁵ The HAP commissioners were concerned because African American households that had made up 18 percent of Vanport in January 1945 were 35 percent of the community by October.⁵⁶ According

to the “Record of Negro Occupancy in Vanport and Guild’s Lake Project,” for that same period the number of African American households in Guild’s Lake Courts increased from 13 percent to 19.5 percent. Figures 3-11, 3-12, 3-13, 3-14, and 3-15 were created using HAP minutes from the October 1945 meeting, hence the lack of data for the months of November and December of 1945 in the figures.



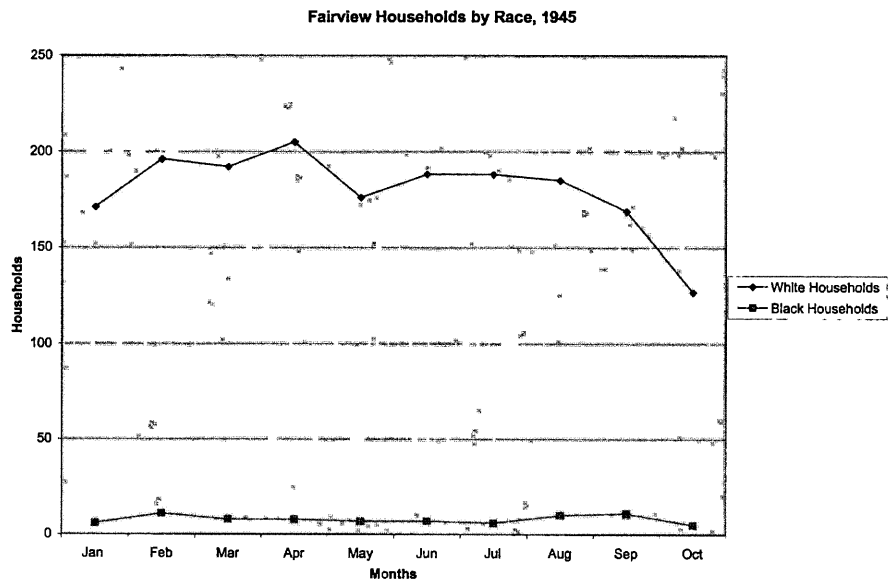
Source: Data from HAP Files City of Portland Archives, Meeting Minutes, October 1945

Figure 3-11. Racial composition of households in Guild’s Lake Courts, January–October 1945.



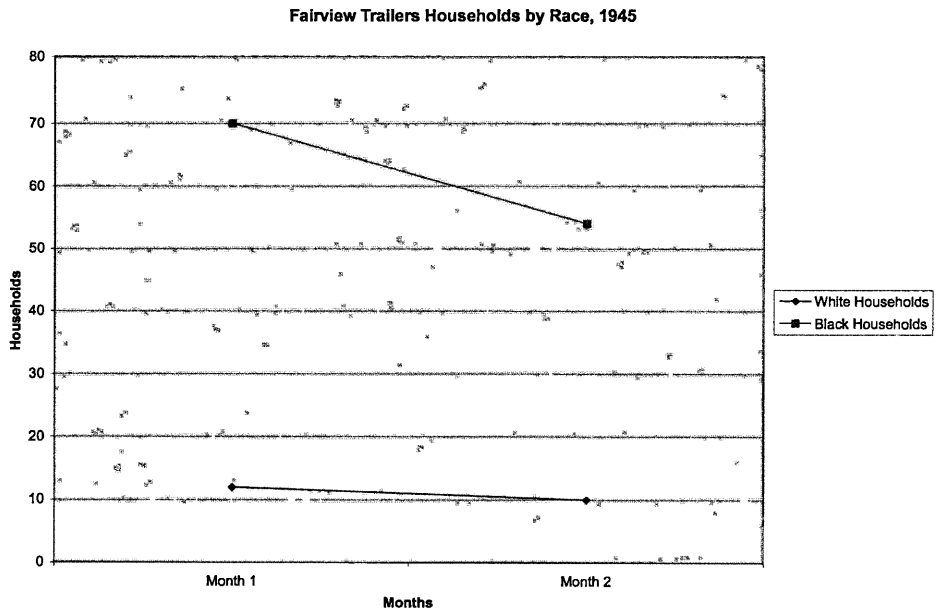
Source: Data from HAP Files, City of Portland Archives, Meeting Minutes, October 1945

Figure 3-12. Racial composition of households in Vanport, January–October 1945.



Source: Data from HAP Files City of Portland Archives, Meeting Minutes, October 1945

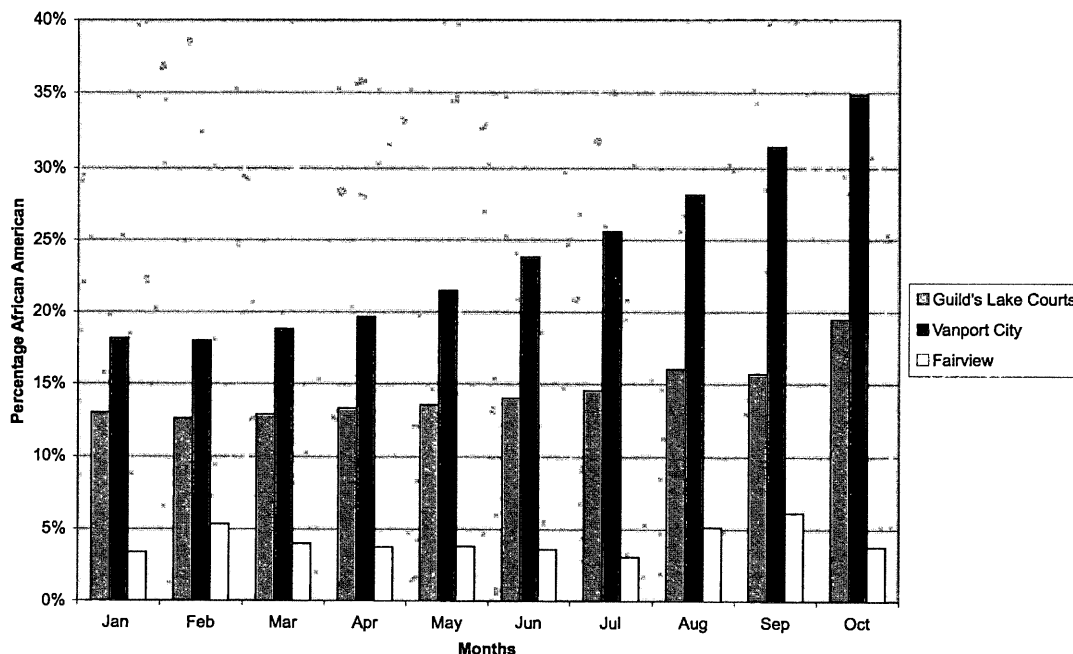
Figure 3-13. Racial composition of households in the temporary houses at Fairview, January–October 1945.



Source: Data from HAP Files City of Portland Archives, Meeting Minutes, October 1945

Figure 3-14. Racial composition of households in the trailers at Fairview, data is only for two unspecified months in 1945, possibly the trailers were removed in March 1945.

Percent African American Households in HAP Defense Housing Projects that housed minorities in 1945



Source: Data from HAP Files, City of Portland Archives, HAP Meeting Minutes, October 1945

Figure 3-15. Percent African American households in Guild’s Lake Courts, Vanport and, Fairview January–October 1945. Population and race data for the trailers in Fairview are not included in this chart.

The culture of segregation intensified after World War II, as public housing units were decommissioned and African Americans faced discrimination in the postwar job market. Job loss and the impermeability of the Portland real estate market led many of Portland’s wartime African American migrants to relocate to other more tolerant Western cities or return to the South. The city that had been grudgingly tolerant of African Americans during the camaraderie of the war years returned to its racist practices with a vengeance. Children living in Vanport and Guild’s Lake Courts

were buffered from the increasing intolerance in Portland by their parents and by the continued racial and class tolerance within the developments.

However, one source contradicts the idea that segregation in public housing in Portland was the usual bill of fare; the source is also one of the few African American voices in the recognized scholarship. Kathryn Bogle, a longtime Portland resident and mother of Dick Bogle, a Portland City Commissioner from 1982 to 1992, asserts that the African American workers who arrived in Portland in World War II came so quickly that there was not enough time to establish segregated space for the new residents. This perspective deserves further investigation into private market conditions, since it has been well established that Guild's Lake Courts and Vanport were segregated.

The literature on Vanport presents divergent historic accounts of the Vanport Flood reconciled by historians only half a century after its 18,500 residents⁵⁷ became homeless in a single day. In one version, the flood destroyed a utopian futuristic city that had been liberating women.⁵⁸ In another, the flood was a providential boon that cleared away a prefabricated slum and made way for progress. The press quoted eyewitnesses in shock over losing their homes. Some of these published accounts created a mass hysteria that allowed much higher death toll figures to enter the zeitgeist; these inaccurate figures represent the fear and mistrust of the African American community and were revisited by scholars like Stuart McElderry, who published "Vanport Conspiracy Rumors and Social Relations in Portland, 1940–1950" in 1998.⁵⁹ In an opposing version, the flood was a community disaster in which 200

residents lost their lives: “Many people felt that the thirteen people reported to have died in the flood was not accurate. They believed that other bodies were secretly buried [stored] in the Terminal Ice and Cold Storage Company Building.”⁶⁰ Historian Manly Maben quotes interviewees in his book who believed there were even higher numbers of dead: In one account 457 bodies were shipped off to Japan and returned as “dead soldiers”; in another account 600 were trapped in buses and homes and swept away by the waters.⁶¹ These false rumors linger because the press at the time used the hysteria to sell papers and because the tensions between old-time Portlanders and the newcomers had taken race relations to a flashpoint.

Once the Kaiser Corporation shut down a number of its shipyards, the city showed African American families just how unwelcome they really were because of the color of their skin. Half of the African Americans families that migrated to Portland in the war years returned to their roots or relocated to more racially tolerant cities in other western states. The event, once woven together with the pre-existing prejudice, interprets the 1948 flood—caused, after all, by a break in a manmade railroad embankment—as a conspiracy irrespective of a missing logical link. The event was followed by benign neglect by citizens and intentional unresponsiveness by HAP—a perspective that only amplified by the outsider treatment African Americans also experienced after the flooding from Hurricane Katrina in 2005; both groups of flood survivors were erroneously and hurtfully tagged “refugees” by the media of their time. Evacuees of the Vanport Flood learned quickly that segregation was still the

policy in Portland, despite the crisis of 5,000 African American evacuees on the street with little more than the shirts on their backs.⁶²

That the flood did not slow the liquidation of the remaining temporary war housing is disturbing. Nationally, 87 percent of defense housing units were liquidated by March 1955⁶³ and by 2000, only 1.9 percent of wartime housing remained under the control of housing authorities. After the flood, Red Cross volunteers offered African Americans one-way tickets out of Portland,⁶⁴ and welfare checks for African American families were cut off. Such events kindled the public's view, despite the lack of evidence, that the flood was not a random disaster. Unsubstantiated conspiracy theories about intentional flooding of the community aside, there were certainly many who gained by the eradication of the public housing ghetto in its infancy.

HAP under Attack for Discrimination, 1945–1964

The federal government directed the Housing Authority of Portland not to discriminate on the basis of race, creed or color. On June 7, 1945, Harry E. Freeman, the first executive director of HAP, wrote an inquiry to Gus J. Solomon, a Portland attorney later appointed a U.S. District Court judge, regarding housing for citizens of Japanese ancestry in HAP defense developments. Freeman reported the response to the HAP Board: Solomon “advised that Japanese citizens are given the same consideration as others; that the Authority cannot discriminate in placing workers from certified war industries in housing projects because of race, creed, or color.⁶⁵ This meant that the regulations also applied to African Americans and all other minorities.

In 1947, the Urban League of Portland started to take action against HAP for not conforming to federal guidelines that required federal public housing units to follow nondiscrimination practices in tenancy.

Studies of housing projects on the West Coast have shown that HAP's discrimination in Portland exceeded the segregation practices many of other contemporary housing authorities.⁶⁶ HAP argued that African Americans had self-selected to segregate and that the poorer conditions of African American dwelling units was a result of illegal occupancy. African American families were notorious for taking in individuals who were not on HAP leases—a habit that arose from the scarcity of housing open to African Americans and not out of a flagrant disregard for the terms of their leases. Richard Sanders' history of HAP, which relied heavily on unpublished work by Gene W. Rossman, a former HAP director, refers to the decade of the 1960s as an era of "Innovation and Strife."⁶⁷ Rossman's text refers to 1963 as the "Year of the Smear" and to 1964 as the "Year of the Sneer."⁶⁸ In his history of the first thirty years of public housing in Portland, the retired director attributes the rush to deprogram (the rapid disposition of all temporary war housing and the relocation of the tenants) to Mayor Fred Peterson, who packed the Housing Authority's board with hostile, anti-public-housing commissioners.⁶⁹ The disposition phase of all defense and war housing occurred nationally between 1947 and 1955; Portland retained less than other cities, which is surprising given the size of the HAP portfolio in 1944. Conflicts of interest were not new to the Housing Authority. Several HAP board members had

real estate interests that had fostered an anti-public-housing bias within the agency since the program's inception.

In this era, dissent over HAP's racial policies "often saw HAP at odds with the African American community."⁷⁰ There were racial skirmishes at housing developments. In 1963, HAP was under attack by fourteen public and private agencies. Because HAP was never charged with any wrongdoing these attacks have been marginalized by HAP historians who attributed the attacks to individual actions. Individuals acting within tenants associations joined other dissenters fighting to end segregation and discrimination practices in a movement that produced the 1964 Civil Rights Act. The segregation policies of World War II and the treatment of Vanport Flood victims explain why Portland has so few public housing units and may help to explain why the city continues to have such a small African American population.

Conclusion

The intent of this chapter is to provide some context for the story of Guild's Lake Courts, the main focus of this dissertation. The federal public housing community at Guild's Lake Courts was not operating in a void. The struggle by the federal government to provide affordable housing and housing opportunities for African Americans is a rich history full of various failed experiments and lost opportunities. As early as 1937, the federal government focused on no-frills architecture, and the Defense-era designs propelled forward innovations in pre-fabrication and affordable materials.

It is important to reflect on the similarities and differences between Vanport and Guild's Lake Courts, two contemporary and massive housing projects. Portland, as this chapter detailed, did not enter into any of the various New Deal Era programs to build permanent housing. A city with no track record with public housing and federal-city relationship through an experienced housing authority would be daunting for even the most experienced and open minded real estate developer appointed to the board. Therefore, it is not surprising that the HAP board was made up of large real estate interest groups: Who else locally would have been prepared for the task?

¹ Paul Lusignan, Judith Robinson, Laura Bobeczko, and Jeffery Shrimpton. *Public Housing: A Historic Context, 1933–1949*, vol. 2. (Unpublished HUD, NPS, NRHP, 2000), 6.

² Ibid., 6.

³ Ibid., 7.

⁴ Perry Fellows, "Housing and Slum-Clearance Activities of the Works Progress Administration," *Real Estate Record* (October 1938): 15, 7.

⁵ Morality in the context of public housing and community design was in many ways directed at child rearing. Public housing units during the New Deal years assured that parents and children of different genders each had their own bedrooms. Community playgrounds were provided and mothers were expected to monitor their children a vast difference from playing in the streets where social workers felt that children were exposed to evils and would than model criminal behaviors.

⁶ Ibid., 19; A. Rheinstein and H. Pringle, "Why Slum Clearance May Fail," *The Architectural Forum* 71, no. 5 (November 1939): 371.

⁷ M. Christine Boyer, *Dreaming the Rational City: The Myth of American City Planning* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1987), 241.

⁸ "Public Housing," *The Architectural Forum*, 68 (May 1938): 396.

⁹ Mr. Wilson was a founder and president of the Council for Advancement of Negroes in Architecture, and a graduate in Architecture from Columbia University. The 574-unit development opened in 1937 with an operating nursery school. Harlem River Houses continues to operate as public housing and is a National Historic Landmark. Ibid., 364; "Construction Outline," *The Architectural Forum* 67 (December 1937): 500–502.

¹⁰ Rheinstein and Pringle, "Why Slum Clearance May Fail," 371.

¹¹ John R. McFarland, "The Administration of the New Deal Greenbelt Towns," *Journal of the American Planning Association* 32, no. 4 (July 1966): 217–225.

¹² Cathy Knepper, *Greenbelt, Maryland: A Living Legacy of the New Deal* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002).

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- ¹³ Keller Easterling and Richard Prelinger, "Chapter 3: New Deal Regional Planning and Greenbelt Towns," *Call It Home: The House that Private Enterprise Built*, 1992, <http://www.columbia.edu/cu/gsap/projs/call-it-home/html/chapter3-nar.html> (accessed January 9, 2006).
- ¹⁴ *Ibid.* (accessed November 27, 2009).
- ¹⁵ Gwendolyn Wright, *Building the Dream: A Social History of Housing in America* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press: 1981), 222.
- ¹⁶ R. Danhof, "Jersey Homesteads," in *A Place on Earth: A Critical Appraisal of Subsistence Homesteads*, edited by Russell Lord and Paul H. Johnstone (Washington, D.C. U. S. Department of Agriculture, 1942), 137.
- ¹⁷ Lusignan et al., *Public Housing*, Appendix 3.
- ¹⁸ Richard Lowitt, *The New Deal and the West* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 145.
- ¹⁹ Lusignan et al., *Public Housing*, 43.
- ²⁰ Richard Pluntz, *A History of Housing in New York City* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 234.
- ²¹ Lusignan et al., *Public Housing*, 39.
- ²² E. Kimbark MacColl, *The Growth of a City: Power Politics in Portland, Oregon, 1915–1950* (Portland, OR: Georgian Press, 1979), 142.
- ²³ *Ibid.*, 6.
- ²⁴ A. J. Hodges, "The World War I Housing Crisis and the Rise of Planning in Portland, Oregon," unpublished paper present for Social Science History Association, November 2005, page 2.
- ²⁵ *Ibid.*, 4.
- ²⁶ Bureau of Planning, *The History of Portland's African American Community (1805–Present)* (Portland: City of Portland, 1993), 50.
- ²⁷ Will Bennett, "Golden West Project," <http://www.african-american-historical-district.com/About.html> (accessed 7 Oct 2009); *Cornerstones of Community: Buildings of Portland's African American History* (Portland, OR: Bosco-Milligan Foundation, 1997), 32.
- ²⁸ Rutherford, *Cornerstones of Community*, 23.
- ²⁹ Rudy Pearson, "African Americans in Portland, Oregon, 1940–1950: Living and Working Conditions—A Social History," unpublished dissertation, Washington State University (May 1996), 99.
- ³⁰ The Bosco-Milligan Foundation report, *Cornerstones of Community: Buildings of Portland's African American History*, produced in 1997, has an extensive index. The index spreadsheets run 125 pages, with over 20,000 historic addresses, and document the fact that many African Americans lived outside of these clusters and were scattered through many neighborhoods.
- ³¹ E. Kimbark MacColl, *The Shaping of a City: Business and Politics in Portland, Oregon, 1885–1915* (Portland, OR: Georgian Press Company, 1977), 536.
- ³² *Ibid.*, 540.
- ³³ *Ibid.*, 269.
- ³⁴ *Ibid.*, 539, 540.
- ³⁵ Elizabeth McLagan, *A Peculiar Paradise: a History of Blacks in Oregon, 1788-1940* (Portland, OR: Georgian Press Company, 1980), 143.
- ³⁶ *Ibid.*, 540.
- ³⁷ Thomas J. Sugrue, "United Communities Are Impregnable: Violence and the Color Line," in *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequity in Postwar Detroit* (New York: Princeton University Press, 1996), 252.
- ³⁸ Edwin C. Berry, "Profiles: Portland," *Journal of Educational Sociology*, Vol. 19, No. 3, Race Relations on the Pacific Coast, November 1945, 158-165.
- ³⁹ Bosco-Milligan Foundation, *Cornerstones of Community*, 63.
- ⁴⁰ Bureau of Planning, *History of Portland's African American Community*, 75.

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- ⁴¹ According to the main federal housing consultant at the time, Miles Colean, temporary construction is, in effect, unfinished, rather than short-lived. Once so-called “temporary housing” is built and occupied, it becomes part of the community and will most likely be upgraded after the defense-housing emergency has passed. Miles Colean, *Housing for Defense: A Review of the Role of Housing in Relation to America’s Defense and Program for Action* (NY: Aron Press, 1940), 74–75.
- ⁴² MacColl, *The Shaping of a City*, 575.
- ⁴³ Jewel Lansing, *Portland: People, Politics, and Power, 1851–2001* (Corvallis, OR: Oregon State University Press, 2003), 340.
- ⁴⁴ “Vanport City, Oregon,” *Wikipedia*, www.wikipedia.org (accessed April, 15, 2009).
- ⁴⁵ Jake Thomas, “Vanport: Portland’s Katrina,” *The Portland Observer*, February 12, 2010, 1. Jason David Rivera, DeMond Shondell Miller, “Continually Neglected: Situating Natural Disasters in the African American Experience.” *Journal of Black Studies*, March 2007, vol 37, no. 4, 502-522. Troy D. Allan, “Katrina: Race, Class, and Poverty: Reflections and Analysis.” *Journal of Black Studies*, March 2007, vol 37, no. 4, 466-468.
- ⁴⁶ Jason David Rivera and DeMond Shondell Miller, “Continually Neglected: Situating Natural Disasters in the African American Experience,” *Journal of Black Studies* 37, no. 4 (2007): 502–522.
- ⁴⁷ MacColl, *The Growth of a City*, 575.
- ⁴⁸ *Ibid.*
- ⁴⁹ Richard Sanders, *Glimpses from the Past: 50 Years of Community Building* (Portland, OR: Housing Authority of Portland Press, 1991), 32.
- ⁵⁰ Pearson, “African Americans in Portland,” 195.
- ⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 203.
- ⁵² Sanders, *Glimpses from the Past*, 51.
- ⁵³ Pearson, “African Americans in Portland,” 199.
- ⁵⁴ MacColl, *The Growth of a City*, 580.
- ⁵⁵ Pearson, “African Americans in Portland,” 199.
- ⁵⁶ Bureau of Planning, *History of Portland’s African American Community*, 74.
- ⁵⁷ Pearson uses the City Club of Portland figure of 19,000; Abbott uses the 18,500 figure. Pearson, “African Americans in Portland,” 140; Carl Abbott, *Greater Portland: Urban Life and Landscape in the Pacific Northwest* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), 70.
- ⁵⁸ Dolores Hayden. *Redesigning the American Dream: Gender, Housing, and Family Life*. NY: W.W. Norton, 2002, pp. 19-32.
- ⁵⁹ Stuart McElderry, “Vanport Conspiracy Rumors and Social Relations in Portland, 1940–1950,” *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 99, no. 2 (Summer 1998): 141.
- ⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 80.
- ⁶¹ Manly Maben, *Vanport* (Portland, OR: Oregon Historical Society Press, 1987), 120.
- ⁶² Pearson, “African Americans in Portland,” 209.
- ⁶³ Kristin Szylvian, “The Federal Housing Program during World War II,” in *From Tenements to the Taylor Homes: In Search of an Urban Housing Policy in Twentieth Century America*, edited by John F. Bauman, Roger Biles, and Kristin M. Szylvian (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000), 133.
- ⁶⁴ Pearson, “African Americans in Portland,” 215.
- ⁶⁵ Harry E. Freeman, HAP Files Commission meeting, 1945, City of Portland Archives.
- ⁶⁶ Pearson, “African Americans in Portland,” 200.
- ⁶⁷ Sanders, *Glimpses from the Past*, 63.
- ⁶⁸ G. W. Rossman, *History of the Housing Authority of Portland, OR, 1941–1973* (Portland, OR: Oregon Historical Society, c. 1973).
- ⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 26.
- ⁷⁰ Sanders, *Glimpses from the Past*, 65.

CHAPTER 4:

GUILD'S LAKE COURTS' NATURAL AND ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY

History of the Site

Two development stories appear in this chapter. The first narrative describes how people altered the natural environment with the desire to transform the Guild's Lake District into an industrial area. The planning effort to have smokestacks replace the marshlands in the Guild's Lake area goes back a hundred years, starting with three businessmen, Henry Corbett, Harvey W. Scott, and Joel M. Long, who began in 1901 to solicit support for a World's Fair.¹ Marshlands today are often protected wetlands, but then they were described as swamps. The second narrative describes the rush at the start of the U.S. involvement in World War II to design and build defense housing in the district in less than a year's time, starting in 1942. The defense housing narrative focuses on the career of architect Morris Whitehouse which culminated in his designs for Guild's Lake Courts, his "Victory Housing Project." The architectural vision of the original defense housing units, child service center, and community center designed for Guild's Lake Courts emerged at the end of Whitehouse's career and are just as architecturally significant as his earlier master works.

Even before the building of his Victory Housing Project designs, it was apparent that more housing was needed. One of the next seven contracts issued for Guild's Lake Courts was offered to his firm. Minimal evidence in the OHS blueprint collection documents that the firm in fact fulfilled the offer and designed an additional division of Guild's Lake Courts; the site plan includes the Wake Court units and some

generic row house floor plans. HAP minutes for this period are not part of the public record but one chart in Box 8 File 0605-01 at the City of Portland archives lists Whitehouse as the designer of Division 35097 and 35026. (See Table 4-1 and Appendix E maps for a complete record of the eight divisions of Guild's Lake Courts, the unit types, and the basic floor plans for each of the eight divisions.) These two narratives form the foundation for how a marshy wetland was drained and buried and how a temporary city was built on that land as a sort of placeholder for impending industry. The two stories have the same motive: the desire of property holders to profit—whether from a fair, wartime defense production or postwar industry.

Marshlands

The marshlands just north of downtown Portland were attractive to industrialists who were dependent on the adjacent Willamette and Columbia rivers for commerce. A mosaic of three interconnected marshland “lakes” were fed by West Hills stream waters: Guild's Lake (250 acres filled by 1931), Kittredge Lake (35–70 acres filled by 1926), and Doane Lake (66 acres; some remains in 2010).² These lakes functioned as a unit, constituting a single riparian marsh that fed into the Willamette River. Guild's Lake's outlet to the river was severed in 1888 by a railway embankment built by Northern Pacific Railroad. Technological advances in construction techniques and the desire of a new generation of national city planners to discourage multi-use communities made the hills, with their views, ideal for private residences and the flatlands and marshes along the rivers enticing for industry.

The first real activity to tame the largest swath of riparian marsh prepared this area for the 1905 Lewis & Clark Centennial and American Pacific Exposition and Oriental Fair (also known as the Lewis & Clark Exposition or the 1905 World's Fair). The reconfigured Guild's Lake, designed as part of the Exposition by John Charles Olmsted in 1903, is far more entrenched in local memory than the other natural Kittredge and Doane Lakes that existed when Peter and Elizabeth Guild claimed their homestead of 598 acres in 1847. St. Helens Road was one of the first encroachments of progress that remains a part of the landscape in the district. The road servicing the Guild's Lake District started off as a trestle³ above the gardens and marshes where in the 1880s Chinese immigrants farmed; in 1886 thirty homes and farms were burned down in the area by an angry mob associated with the KKK.⁴ One image of the Guild's Lake from the turn of the twentieth century shows St. Helens Road as a plank road.⁵

1905 Lewis & Clark Exposition Site

The Lewis & Clark Exposition team created an electrically glowing fairyland on several hundred acres (the lake itself was a considerable feature of these acres; see Figure 4-1). Promotion and the raising of capital for the fair started in 1901. In 1902, when the Exposition Association leased the 46 land parcels covering 406 acres (half of which were under water) for use as a fair by, all major landowners (heirs of the Ladd, Reed, Ainsworth, Corbett fortunes) received property tax exemptions for the period of the lease.⁶ By 1903 grading of the marshlands in the Guild's Lake District was

underway.

The palatial grounds were a short-term innovation that attracted visitors and future investment to Portland. “Over 2,500,000 visitors passed through the portals, including 135,000 from east of the Mississippi River.”⁷ No expense was spared on the design for the landscape when the fair promoters hired John Charles Olmsted (stepson of the famed landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted) to plan the grounds. The manmade lake, Guild’s Lake, was the result of damming the original marshlands. The popular architectural firm of Widden & Lewis designed many of the main buildings. The original “lake” was deepened, a transformation enhanced by framing the picturesque water feature with ornamental plantings. Buildings reflected in the now-glistening waters, but none of the lath and plaster or plywood structures⁸ were built to last. Like many fairs from San Francisco to New York, the majority of fair buildings in Portland were part of a stage built to entertain for a set amount of time and then vanish. Plywood had just been patented in Portland and it was just one demonstration of the region’s technological superiority and innovativeness. The fair buildings mostly had Spanish Renaissance façades and the City Beautiful movement inspired the white exteriors.

Unlike other cities, which would convert fair grounds into park lands and university campuses, little effort was made to retain the landscape as a municipal recreation site, despite the fact that Olmsted had also been hired to consult on development planning for Portland’s park system. New buildings, sewers, roads, electrified streetcar lines, and water systems were developed as part of the

Exposition's infrastructure. According to historian Carl Abbott, streetcars were already servicing the area, and their existence helped for the site over three other potential locations on the east side of the Willamette River and in City (Washington) Park. "The Portland Railway and the City and Suburban Railway [C]ompany ran cars within a block of the probable entrance and the Northern Pacific Railroad traced the site's eastern boundary on an artificial embankment that helped to impound the lake. Although ownership was divided among dozens of parcels, the land was undeveloped and cheap to lease."⁹ The investors waited to see if the lake existed in the summer months; once they observed that the lake, although shallow, was in fact was a year-round natural feature, the site selection process was complete. The Vaughn Street Baseball Park, which opened in 1901, was already a successful draw for crowds into the neighborhood. Interestingly, the financiers of the ballpark, E. I. Fuller and C. F. Swigert, also operated the very street/trolley cars that had attracted fair sponsors to the site. Fuller and Swigert had to double the spectator capacity for the ballpark in 1905 (for more on the ballpark, see chapter 7). Those streetcars and the ballpark itself were integrated into the fair.

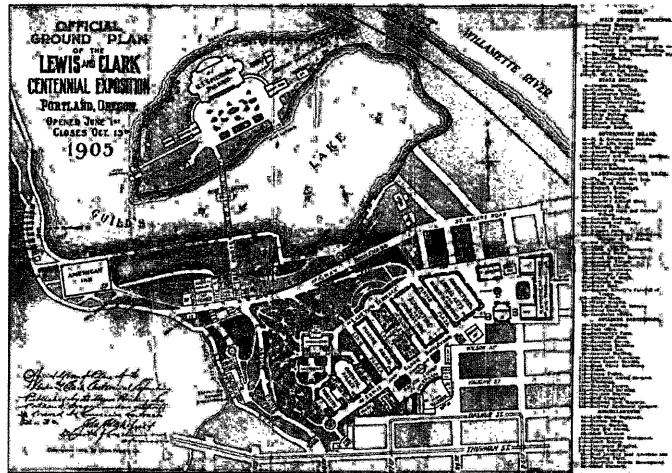


Figure 4-1. (map) The Lewis & Clark Centennial Exposition, 1905. Guild's Lake was a major feature of the landscape of the fair. Courtesy of City of Portland Archives.

After the exposition, the twenty million gallons of fresh water that had been pumped in to the lake continually during the fair¹⁰ were no longer pumped in. Once the exposition pulled up stakes and its buildings were either moved intact, salvaged for materials, or demolished, the acres “reverted to its natural shallow, marshy state, making it less appealing to citizens.”¹¹ By 1906 only one of the large buildings, located on higher ground, remained: the Forestry Center Building, an enormous log cabin that was out of sync with the “high architecture” of the other fair buildings with their white facades. It was used as a museum (and enjoyed by many residents of Guild's Lake Courts) until it burned down in 1964. Of the smaller buildings, the Oriental Exhibits Building was not destroyed until 1911. Of the exhibition halls, National Cash Register Company's small building has survived, for “this spectacular building was barged down the Willamette River to its current location where subsequent incarnations included Lutheran Church, American Legion Post, bingo

parlor, and home for Gypsy wakes. The ever-evolving dome was later reinvented as Duffy's Irish Pub and finally, St. Johns Theater & Pub."¹² Part of the American Inn, the only on-site hotel at the fair, was moved to NW 21st Ave. and Northrup St., and has been converted into condominiums. The Fairmont Hotel,¹³ just outside the main gates at 1920 NW 26th Ave., was probably the first example of a private market affordable housing multi-family structure in the district.

Purchasing 250 acres of land in 1906, United Railway was the main landholder in the Guild's Lake District after the exposition.¹⁴ It seems that the fair did little to boost the value of land in the Guild's Lake District, although it certainly boosted values in adjacent neighborhoods like Nob Hill, where luxury apartment buildings like the Wickersham were being built to accommodate new arrivals to the booming city. "Streetcar traffic doubled and doubled again as Portland added 2,400 houses and apartments each year during the Exposition boom. Between 1900 and 1916, the old westside neighborhoods grew from 58,000 to 96,000 residents by packing families more tightly into already developed areas."¹⁵ Silt filled in the lakes, and little development occurred as the mud settled. United Railway may have been land banking and waiting to earn a profit. Despite three years and a million dollars spent on vitalizing the area, Guild's Lake District in 1906 reverted into an underutilized area of the city for decades.

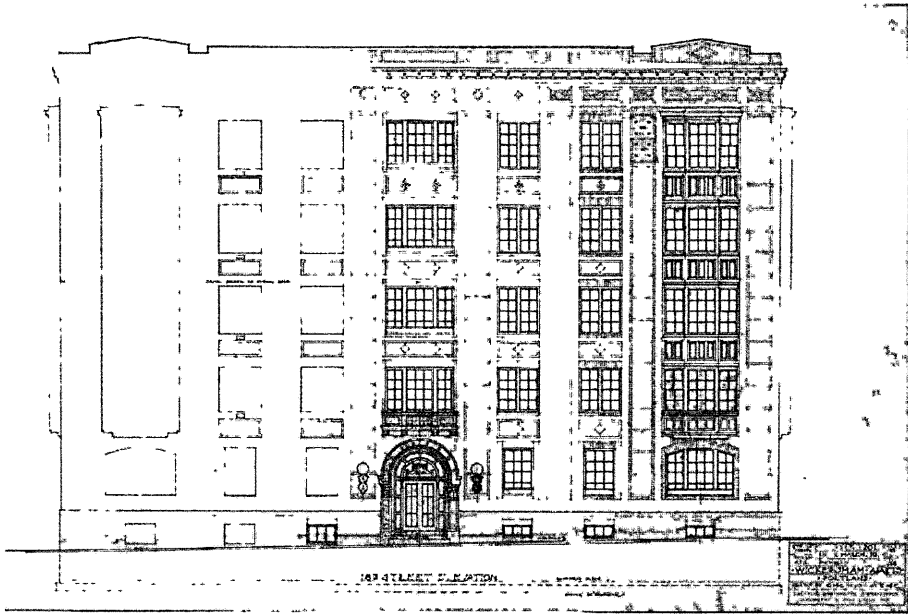


Figure 4-2. Pencil rendering by architect Morris Whitehouse of the façade of the Wickersham Apartments, built in 1910, 410 NW 18th Ave. Courtesy of the Oregon Historical Society.

The Fill

According to historian Kathleen D. Tucker, 250 acres of marshlands adjacent to the Willamette River in the Guild's Lake District were filled in between 1905 and 1925. The first efforts to fill the lake occurred first between 1905 and 1915 by sluicing the adjacent hillsides, then the Port of Portland provided additional fill material acquired from its dredging activities along the Willamette River. Nearby Balch Creek was diverted into a sewer pipe in the early 1920s, at the same time the installation of the railroad berm of the Northern Pacific Railroad not only elevated the tracks above the riverbed but also forced the drainage of the marshlands into a conduit.¹⁶ The Great Depression prevented any further efforts to industrialize the site, whose main landholders were now the railroad and oil companies.



Figure 4-3. (photo) Aerial of Guild's Lake Courts, c. 1944, looking east. The oil tanks in lower left corner still actively operate at the site. Courtesy of the City of Portland Archives.

One key player in the environmental degradation of the site after the fair was Lafe Pence, a contractor and former congressman from Colorado who was vilified in his own lifetime for his negative impact. Pence entrenched himself with the power investors and real estate speculators of Portland when he bought 100 acres in the Guild's Lake District in 1905 for \$140,000.¹⁷ To make a quick profit on his holding, Pence needed to eliminate the swamp, so he soon constructed several sluices on the hillside above, disregarding rules and environmental impacts. The system of sluicing used rain runoff in the winter and Balch Creek in the summer to transport the hillside material into Guild's Lake, which was included in his tract of land. The legal problem with the developer's scheme was that his sluice crossed MacLeay Park, city property, damaging the MacLeay public lands between his operations on the hillside and the flat lands below:

When Mayor Lane discovered that Pence had never received official permission to run flumes over city property, he ordered the operation terminated. After a period of non-compliance, the mayor, in company with a couple of policemen, hiked up to the scene with pick and shovel and personally destroyed the largest of the flumes.¹⁸

Unrelated to Mayor Lane's attack on Pence's operation, the project's financing failed in 1907 and he and his investors lost control of the land; the operations to fill Guild's Lake were assumed by his former competitors from Seattle.

The new hydraulic contractors Charles Wiley and William Lewis continued to carve a new landscape to create Westover Terraces, using the displaced soil from the hillside to fill in another fifty acres of Guild's Lake.¹⁹ They had acquired title to forty acres of the southern edge of Guild's Lake in 1909, an area that was only seasonally underwater and which took less fill.²⁰ Their hydraulic company also purchased ninety acres above Guild's Lake with the help of key investors "bankers John Ainsworth and Henry Corbett, *The Oregonian* publisher Henry Pittock and realtor Dorry Keasey."²¹ Their continued financing of the Guild's Lake fill project was questionable after they had completed their efforts to develop Westover Terraces and their efforts to drain the residential developments on the hillsides were so inadequate that WPA grants were required in the late 1930s to build adequate drainage systems to prevent the continuous landslides that had ensued.²² Basically, private capital could not convert the wetlands of the Guild's Lake District into dry, developable parcels of land, and only about a fifth of Guild's Lake and an undisclosed amount of Kittredge Lake had been filled in by methods available to private developers.

What completed the task of filling in the Guild's Lake marshlands was a coordinated effort starting in 1921 between the Portland Commission of Public Docks (created in 1910), the Port of Portland (a public corporation chartered by the state in 1891), the private industrialists, and the railway companies, facilitated by the introduction of industrial zoning. James B. Kerr represented the Reed Institute and advised the railroad companies in which he held shares and was concurrently a director of United Railways. The Port was willing to sell dredged material to fill in Guild's Lake; to cover the expense of the fill in Kerr's plan²³ (which was praised for its ingenuity), "landowners would pay the port through land transfers and assessment based on acreage of the filled property."²⁴ This convoluted land exchange system (land swapping between private landholders, not just between landowners and the Port) explains why tracing land titles of leased parcels of land used to develop Guild's Lake Courts later was problematic and unyielding. Kerr's plan did not have the power of eminent domain behind it; landowners who did not wish to transfer landholdings were expected to pay a set dollar amount for the fill by volume used even if they were not interested in participation. Even after it was filled the area remained vacant (see Figure 4-4) because there was an inability to work collectively to mitigate all the drainage and flood issues and the Great Depression hit the construction industry the hardest. It took federal interest in the undeveloped parcels of land in 1942 to complete the task started by Pence in 1905. The efforts of private developers demonstrate the inherent risk of real estate's boom-bust nature and how the desire to produce at a profit took precedence over preservation of natural land features.



Figure 4-4. (Aerial photo) Fill completed at Guild's Lake District, image shot on June 1, 1930; the area was just a swath of sand (the lighter shading) and the fill from the hillside appears darker. Courtesy of the Oregon Historical Society, OrHi 64447, photographer Brubaker Aerial Surveys.

Architectural Significance

To keep up with the tremendous influx of workers required by defense industries in the early 1940s, the construction of housing units, schools, roads, and community centers proceeded at an unprecedented speed in Portland. The vast open space and proximity to industrial production and freight hubs made the Guild's Lake land a prime site for defense housing. From 1940 to 1944, three distinct types of construction characterized the federal defense housing program as built at defense industry sites across the nation: 1) permanent houses, 2) temporary houses and 3) trailers. Guild's Lake Courts housing units were classified as temporary; however, after the war ended, some units were reclassified as permanent, so that they could be moved intact and reused (see chapter 9 for more details). Guild's Lake Courts is also culturally significant because it was the first officially segregated community in

Portland. Like segregated communities created across the country by the federal government in the early 1940s, the true evils of segregation did not emerge as a rallying point in the African American community until after the war ended. The majority of Division 35059 containing Manila Street was cleared of housing as early as 1944; that location received 400 federal surplus trailers in June 1948 to provide housing for the Vanport Flood victims. Therefore, Guild's Lake Courts became, in fact, an example of all three types of Defense-era public housing construction.

Architects and contractors across the country experimented with new prefabrication technologies because of labor shortages and material constraints. But the Portland-Vancouver area outpaced the nation with enough housing to support entire cities of workers; perhaps it was the proximity of timber and the use of plywood that enabled the region to succeed. Dovetailing with the technological inventiveness was the fact that the region's undeveloped sites large enough for an economy of scale were not possible in older cities on the East Coast. Areas of open land near industrial centers were selected for vast numbers of indistinguishable row houses and uniform nursery school and community buildings, designed centrally in federal offices irrespective of site geography. There were soil quality differences at the Guild's Lake Courts site in the areas filled through Willamette River dredging, complicating housing construction in a way that was not a challenge in areas filled with compacted dirt from the adjacent hillside.

As early as April 1942, the Housing Authority of Portland (HAP) was obtaining the services of leading local architects,²⁵ such as Pietro Belluschi,²⁶ who drafted blueprints

for “minimum housing” with “essentials of plumbing, few doors, no window hardware, no basement, and the use of rustic siding and natural wood finish.”²⁷ The HAP board was composed of a realtor, a banker, an apartment owner, and a trade union leader it is likely that the realtor and chairman of HAP Chester A. Moores had the most familiarity with local architects. In 1941, Oregon Congressman Homer Angell pressured Clark Foreman, director of the federal Division of Defense Housing, to hire only local architects for Portland housing projects.²⁸ Angell’s efforts were successful and allowed many leading local architects—including Glenn Stanton, Hollis Johnston, Ellis Lawrence, Morris Whitehouse, Marion Stockes, Wade Pipes, Richard Sundeleaf, and Herman Brookman—to participate in the design of defense housing.²⁹ The full listing of local architects that worked on Guild’s Lake Courts is included in Table 4-1.

Guild’s Lake Courts was a conglomeration of eight building projects that provided 25 percent of the wartime housing that operated by HAP. The eight projects, called “divisions” in the plans, were organized in three distinct clusters (see Appendix 5 for detailed maps). The 1942 drafted plans attributed to Morris Whitehouse were for the 358 units that residents dubbed the “electric units” because they came with electric stoves, heaters, and refrigerators. Federally designated Division 35026, this part of the cluster was bordered by NW Guam, Guild, and Luzon Streets and NW 35th Avenue and was originally conceived of as a unique, isolated development. However, the adjacent Division 35097, also attributed to Morris Whitehouse, and referred to colloquially as Wake Place, might have opened first and was immediately adjacent to

Oregon Steel, Esco, Shofner Iron and Steel Works, and Schnitzer Steel. However, within a year, seven other divisions, consisting of 2,248 units, were also being implemented; these were completed on December 27, 1943, just nineteen months after the completion of the most permanent units.

The most hidden history of any of the eight divisions of Guild's Lake Courts is Division 35095. It consisted of seven independent infill sites designed by Earnest C. Sinnett in the Slabtown neighborhood nearby: (1) eight units on the corner of NW Savier and NW 22nd Avenue, (2) thirty-two units spanning NW Raleigh from NW 22nd Avenue to NW 21st Avenue, (3) twelve units on the corner of NW 24th Place and Thurman Street, (4) sixteen units on the corner of NW Upshur Street and NW 29th Avenue, (5) eighteen units on NW 21st Avenue spanning from NW York Street to NW Reed Street, and (6) twenty-four units on the corner of NW 20th Avenue and Wilson Street (see Maps Sheet 1, Appendix 5 and Map 9-1).

Due to wartime rationing, the quality of materials used for the construction of Guild's Lake Courts in 1942 was increasingly sub-par. The new building material, plywood, a common element of housing today, was considered low quality. Construction supplies and gasoline to power equipment were limited, and allocations—particularly of metals needed for pipes and nails—were not promptly directed towards housing. Each housing unit had to be compact and was streamlined to ensure economical use of materials and labor. The project's speedy construction and cost savings have been credited to the novel pre-fabricated panels created by the Portland Door Company.³⁰ Rationing was also responsible for the stand-alone shower,

an example of cost savings on materials leading to a lifestyle innovation, since cast iron tubs were either too expensive or unavailable.

The designs of the other seven divisions of Guild's Lake Courts have not been attributed to any single architectural firm. Surprisingly, in cases when multiple architects listed in the last column of Table 4-1 appear in a single box, there is no record of these men working together within any pre-existing or postwar architectural firm. It is clear that the designers hired after Morris Whitehouse were much more influenced by federal government architects and less able to allow for regional and individual innovations. HAP commissions passed a motion to hire three firms to expedite the creation of 1,000 new units on September 9, 1943. These firms were "(1) Stanton & Johnston, (2) Whitehouse & Roehr, (3) Jones and Marsh."³¹ Although these appointments appear to be for non-Guild's Lake sites—400 units at Swan Island, 400 units at St. John's Woods, and 200 units at Hudson Street Homes³²—it is apparent that the HAP commissioners trusted the opinion of Clarence H. Wick, director of HAP's Management Division, to retain multiple architects and that he had most likely retained the architects for Guild's Lake Courts.

This strategy made sense because, in the words of the Project Planner of the Regional Office of the Federal Public Housing Authority, Gifford Sobey, they are "emphasizing the fact that speed would be the most essential factor in the new program."³³ Ralph Collett and Clarence Coddington represented the Kaiser Corporation at that meeting. They advocated for 5,000 to 8,000 additional units for their projected workforce. Mr. Collett had made a similar request before the commissioners of HAP

on January 29, 1943, with Edgar J. Kaiser asking for 7,220 units at that time, stating that married workers made the best employees and that construction of family housing would be advantageous.³⁴

The inadequacy of the number of units to meet the needs of industry for secure worker housing was quickly remedied. HAP opened bids for the construction of new units at Guild's Lake Courts from January 15 to February 4, 1943, and construction of multi-family row house dwellings started May 14, 1943. The units were completed on December 27, 1943. Families were the least served group by the private market and the designers of defense housing may not have realized that the tenants would need to adapt their common spaces for sleeping rooms to accommodate more children than the buildings were conceived to house.

The single-story four-plexes and two-story six-plexes built in this massive second wave were inferior to the initial single-family structures, a result of both an effort to reduce the rising costs of the defense housing program and the reality of material shortages. Architects were sharing cost-saving design innovations in trade journals like *The New Pencil Points* and *Architectural Record*. A three-article series in *The New Pencil Points* focused on the efforts of architect and engineering firm A. D. Taylor and Associates at the war housing project in Kingsford Heights, Indiana. Articles were intended to assist peers on how to manage the design of large, prefabricated housing developments with cost limits of \$4,000 per temporary dwelling unit:

The Government required a *subdivision* type of design, as opposed to *super-block* development. Subdivision planning provides each family unit with its own, tenant-maintained lot, directly abutting on an improved right-of-way, or street. It is further required that the *front* of each dwelling face the street, and that in no case could the *end* of a dwelling face the street. These decisions restrict the freedom which might have been obtained by a super-block layout.... In contrast, super-block planning could have produced a more open scheme, lessened site costs.... Design was further limited by the requirement that grading be kept to a minimum.³⁵

This experience detailed by this one architect leads to the conclusion that the movement towards these subdivision site plans was not a style but in fact a federal directive limiting architectural freedom. One requirement that grading be kept to a minimum explains in part why the flat Guild's Lake District was such an appealing site.

Table 4-1. Public Housing Planned Construction in Portland's Guild's Lake District 1942

Division	Number of workers projected	Number of units built	Number of residents estimated	Const. start	Cost in dollars	Contractors	Architects
35059	432	360	1080	1-27-43	839,268	Askevoid & Ruud	<i>Herzog and Tucker</i>
35091	790	718	2154	1-30-43	1,439,670	Pacific Construction Company	<i>Harrett & Logan and Earl Cash</i>
35092 <i>(unbuilt)</i>	290	<i>none</i>	792	1-22-42	696,860	<i>Tri-state Construction Company</i>	<i>Stockes, Dougan & Heims</i>
35095	126	114	342	1-23-43	234,853	Ernest C. Sinnett	<i>Richard Sundeleaf, Herman Brookman</i>
35096	100	90	270	1-21-43	188,006	K.T. Henderson	<i>Sutton, Whitney & Aandahl</i>
35097	143	130	390	1-25-43	302,628	Gilmer & Halvorson	<i>Morris H. Whitehouse</i>
35098	524	476	1428	7-4-43	1,204,656	Lease and Leigland	<i>Jones & Marsh Road & Schneider</i>
35099	432	360	1080	5-4-43	720,470	Northwest Construction Comp	<i>John K. Dukehart</i>
35026	X	358	X	5-14-42	1,126,500	Ross B Hammond Co.	Morris H. Whitehouse

File 0605-01, Box 8, City of Portland Archives. At this time housing project still unnamed, estimates four persons to a family for row-housing. Note that Division 35026 is not listed. Original Table Heading: "Public Housing Completed or under construction in Portland, Clackamas, Vancouver 1942."

Text in bold updated plate 40 from *Glimpses of the Past* p. 34. Division 35092 is the division that was never built.

The names of architects involved were not uncovered in time to do them each justice. Some architects listed, like Herman Brookman, are well known and had worked in the past with Morris Whitehouse. Drawings of the contributions to Defense-

era housing in Portland by architects other than Whitehouse exist in archives outside of Portland but were not examined for this project. Clearly, in a pre-AutoCAD era of hand-drawn blueprints, hiring numerous architects was prudent. It would be worth investigation to ascertain if the firms operated as a consortium or if specific firms were assigned individual divisions of the Guild's Lake Courts projects. Of the \$48,757,124 spent to construct 19,287 war housing units and community buildings between 1942-1944; \$6,221,517 was spent to construct all eight sections of Guild's Lake Courts.³⁶ The below average cost to construct the units at Guild's Lake Courts might be because land had to be purchased at the other locations in Portland. After a brief section focuses on the career of various involved architects, the focus will be on Morris Whitehouse and the architectural significance of the dwelling units and community facilities that he designed.

Harry Albert Herzog was one of the team of architects including Morris H. Whitehouse and Herman S. Brookman who contributed to the design of Temple Beth Israel. Herman S. Brookman designed the Art Deco Commodore Hotel in 1926, on 1609 S.W. Morrison Street, the lobby details and pelican motif on the roofline of the hotel are more akin to the details in Temple Beth Israel than to any architectural details in Guild's Lake Courts. Herzog is also known for the Art Deco style used in many of his designs including the extant 1931 Jeane Manor and Parkway Manor apartment buildings. Ritz's *Architects of Oregon* states that from 1932 to 1948 he was in solo practice and does not explain why he worked with Ernest Fanning Tucker on the defense housing project. Tucker had worked as an office boy and draftsman for A.

E. Doyle; Ritz's *Architects of Oregon* has Tucker as part of the firm Tucker and Wallman from 1935 to 1946. Tucker is known for moving from modern to Northwest Regional style and has contributed to many structures on the PSU campus. More effort to explore his contribution to Division 35059 should be attempted.

Division 35091 is another puzzling combination of independent Portland-based architects; this pooling of local talents in public housing design recalls the New Deal PWA housing program. Once again, one of the team had worked with Morris H. Whitehouse, which leads to the speculation that Whitehouse, upon finishing the designs of the first division planned at Guild's Lake Courts, had a role in the selection of the design teams for other divisions. Thayne Johnson Logan worked from 1939 to 1959 with Robert Barrett. That firm is known to have designed war housing as well as a number of churches. Earl G. Cash designed the Oregon Shipbuilding Corporation Office Building in 1941; that contribution might have helped him to secure a position on the Guild's Lake Courts project.

Defense Housing with a Focus on the "Electric Units" Designed by Morris Whitehouse

For certain, Guild's Lake Courts' first 358 units were designed by Morris H. Whitehouse and constructed by Ross B. Hammond (although the contractor stated in Table 5-1 was Gilmer & Halvorson). At the time of the drafting of the first design for Guild's Lake Courts, Whitehouse was part of the firm Whitehouse & Church; Whitehouse was a prestigious architect long before the housing authority retained him

to design a public housing project. In his thirty-four years of practice in Oregon, he had contributed to the design of Temple Beth Israel³⁷ and the Sixth Church of Christ Scientist.³⁸ Historian E. Kimbark MacColl indicates that the architectural firm of Whitehouse & Fouilhoux, a Portland-based partnership, maintained an office in New York.³⁹ This is also documented in blueprints stored at the Oregon Historical Society.⁴⁰

Morris H. Whitehouse's design of the electrified dwellings at Guild's Lake Courts and one of its community centers have been forgotten by those interested in his career, in part because his design was dwarfed by later additions to the development. Also, with his sudden death on April 4, 1944, he was never able to advocate for the preservation of the first division he designed at Guild's Lake Courts. Whitehouse designed one division that is distinctly different from the others designed that same year to fill the increasing demand for housing.

Among the eight divisions of the Guild's Lake Courts development, seven define one large swath on the landscape segmented by railway lines, and one was infill on seven unique parcels of land in Slabtown. These divisions as a whole offer the architectural historian a variety of design variations to explore, using blueprints and historic images. The initial units demonstrate how Whitehouse was able to overcome financial and materials quality limitations set by federal restrictions. The higher design quality of these units and their courts was reflected in the fact that residents perceived them to be the most desirable of the entire community. In retrospect the site plan is clearly a suburban layout, making Guild's Lake Courts a prototype of suburban

residential development in the electric age. Ironically, while these Defense-era suburban prototypes drew minorities from the South into Northern cities, the suburban movement of the 1950s was used by whites to escape the ills of city life, including proximity to minorities and working-class families.



Figure 4-5. (photo) Electric unit at 3327 NW Guam Street with picket fence and lush grass landscapes around other dwellings, c. 1944. Courtesy of Chuck Charnquist.

Had the Guild's Lake Courts not been so dramatically expanded to include a vast overwhelming expanse of prefabricated housing, the units designed by Whitehouse might have been preserved. Whitehouse was an innovator who met the challenges of limited defense housing budgets and inspired innovative developments in "Victory Housing" that became a model for residential housing in the postwar suburbs. The electric units were aesthetically appealing, especially when juxtaposed against dwellings at Guild's Lake Courts that had exteriors of Gibson board covered in thick, painted paper material. Many of the Whitehouse units were detached, single-

family dwellings in the inner court; those on the other ring of the courtyards were duplexes, and all were built on horseshoe cul-de-sacs (see Figure 4-10).

These units contained such wondrous domestic advances as showers, electric stoves, and electric refrigerators—conveniences that came to symbolize America's postwar modernity. Defense housing, unlike the New Deal Public Works Administration (PWA) housing that preceded it, was designed for a population with access to the automobile. Many of the photographs taken in 1944 of the dwellings show cars, which sets the sense of time and place more than the generic houses themselves. The federal government's efforts to provide wartime worker housing were just the prelude to the postwar, market-driven, prefabricated suburban home.

In Portland, the classification of defense housing as either permanent or temporary had, in some cases, no correlation to the method of construction. Classification as temporary was a political move intended to ease concern over ghetto construction and competition with postwar private housing markets. Temporary construction was a response to what planners thought would be a limited wartime need, a need that would decline after the defense industries closed—assuming that workers would return to former residences.

Morris H. Whitehouse was one of the first licensed architects in Oregon and an expert in school design. He was a Portland native who enrolled in the Boston School of Technology and traveled Europe to study architectural styles before returning to Portland and opening his first office in 1908. Table 4-2 shows the architectural firms Whitehouse associated with throughout his career. Also Appendix D has a full listing

of current National Historic Register structures he designed. These structures have been recognized by the Department of the Interior as having architectural significance that makes them worthy of preservation efforts.

Table 4-2. Chronology of firms of Morris H. Whitehouse, 1908–1942

1908–1909	Whitehouse & Honeyman, Architects
1909–1911	Lazarus, Whitehouse & Fouilhoux, Architects
1910–1920	Whitehouse & Fouilhoux, Architects
1920–1925	Morris H. Whitehouse, Architect
1926–1931	Morris H. Whitehouse & Associates, Architects
1932–1935	Whitehouse, Stanton & Church, Architects
1935–1942	Whitehouse & Church, Architects

Source: Oregon Historical Society index for contents of the Morris Whitehouse Collection

The Whitehouse firms designed barns, churches, country clubs, government buildings, office buildings, residences, schools, warehouses, and World War II-era housing projects in Portland, Oregon, and Vancouver, Washington.⁴¹ Throughout his career, Whitehouse searched for order and was strongly influenced by the symmetry of classicism. He was a dedicated designer who placed his career first. An early effort was his winning design in a competition for Portland's Jefferson High School in Portland, in 1909. In order to meet the needs of the school district, he delayed his wedding to modify his vision and finish his design for the school (a vision which has been stripped away over time from the now muted, but still standing, structure).

Whitehouse & Fouilhoux also designed the original Lincoln High School, which was built in 1910–1912 (see Figure 4-6). Located on SW Broadway between

Market and Mill streets, it was the “neighborhood” high school for the residents of Guild’s Lake Courts. This structure renamed Lincoln Hall on the campus of Portland State University in downtown Portland now functions as university classrooms.

Another project was Failing Grammar School designed in 1912, named for Josiah Failing, when the school opened 90% of the students were immigrants. This structure became the main campus building for the National College of Natural Medicine in 1996, at “049” SW Porter Street.⁴²

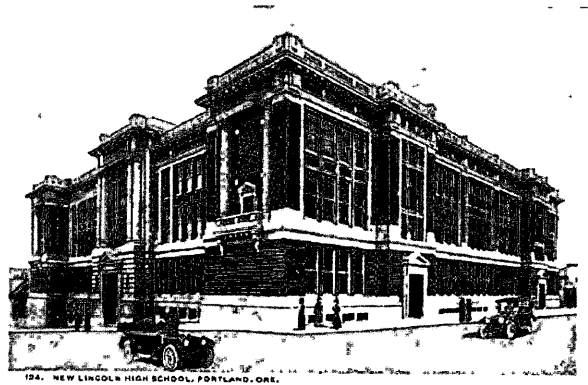


Figure 4-6. (postcard) Lincoln High School, c. 1912. Courtesy of Portland Public Schools.

Whitehouse’s love of multi-pane windows and masonry façades with striking belt courses in the Romanesque style had to be modified for the streamlined industrialized requirements of federally funded Defense-era developments. Even under constraints imposed by a client that was more interested in conformity to federal guidelines than in innovation, Whitehouse continued to design with a very conscientious understanding of how natural light could be integrated into the simple designs to enhance the experience on the interior, just as he had in his grander structures created under conditions with less crisis and longer construction timelines.

Long before the construction of the I-405 highway and the Fremont Bridge in Portland, there was a thriving private residential community adjacent to the site of Guild's Lake Courts that hoped to benefit after the war from the resulting infrastructure (roads, water, and power), school, and community centers.

Figures 4-7 and 4-8 are black-and-white reproductions of original blueprints for the first community center located in the Guild's Lake District, designed by Whitehouse in 1942. Because the Housing Authority of Portland retained an architect of this quality in 1942, the building was one of the permanent community buildings, expected to be retained after the temporary housing was removed.

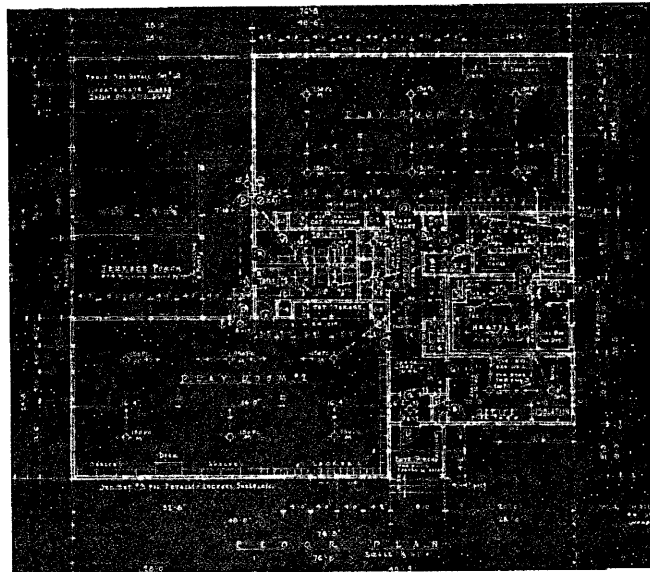


Figure 4-7. (blueprint) Floor plan design by Morris Whitehouse of the Guild's Lake Courts Childcare Center located on St. Helen's Road. Courtesy of the Oregon Historical Society.

It is somewhat ironic that the architect of three of the area's most posh private clubs also designed a "club" for the residents of Guild's Lake Courts. Happily, this

facility benefited from Whitehouse's years of experience for the wealthiest and most educated clientele in the city. The residential community at Guild's Lake Courts allowed for Whitehouse to design not just a modernist façade but an entire innovative site plan streamlining garden city and modernist structures, a design that was quite possibly his last professional effort completed in his lifetime.

Whitehouse designed three buildings as exclusive community centers for the Portland elite: the Multnomah Amateur Athletic Club (not the MAC), the Oswego Lake Country Club, and the University Club. The Multnomah Amateur Athletic Club, founded in 1891, hired Whitehouse in 1911 to design an elaborate facility in the Jacobethan style next to the Multnomah Athletic Field (subsequently renamed Multnomah Stadium, Portland Civic Stadium, and PGE Park). That original MAC building at 1849 SW Salmon Street—a location befitting its upper-crust members—became a page in a history book as well, when replaced in 1983.

The other two Whitehouse club buildings remain in use today as club facilities. His addition to the Lake Oswego Country Club (1925–1927) is more akin to the striped-façade International style of the Guild's Lake Courts community building than to his other club facilities. The University Club's façade is similar to the high style of the Wickersham Apartment building in that both are striking multi-story masonry buildings. The vision for the Lake Oswego Country Club institution as an organization was developed by Whitehouse's client Paul Murphy as a way to make the city of Lake Oswego a year-round living environment; Whitehouse was sensitive to his client's vision in this less ostentatious yet very contemporary design. The commissioned

design of this non-urban clubhouse, as a community center for the upper class in what was then an undeveloped area, has more exterior visual seminaries with the community center Whitehouse designed for Northwest Portland in 1942 to enhance the holistic nature of the first housing constructed at Guild's Lake Courts.

In *Classic Houses of Portland, Oregon 1850–1950*, Hawkins and Willingham describe Morris H. Whitehouse as an architect, capable of designing buildings with bold expression. Known in the first phase of his career for classically influenced architecture, he was later able to embrace modern design trends. An MIT graduate, he was influenced by time spent at the American Academy in Rome and other European travels supported on his scholarships as a promising student. According to Hawkins and Willingham, he was “among the first to impart the sense of ‘stripped traditional’ to his residential designs.”⁴³ Richard Ritz credits Morris Whitehouse with founding the “longest lived architectural firm in the history of architecture in Portland” and credits Whitehouse’s firm with designing many of the most important buildings constructed in Portland and Salem between 1900 and 1950.⁴⁴ Glen Stanton, one of the designers of the North Portland war housing project Columbia Villa (one of the two Portland defense housing projects classified as permanent), worked for Morris Whitehouse until 1935. The firms with which Whitehouse was connected designed many buildings that are National Historic Landmarks today, including eleven structures in Portland and one in Salem, Oregon (the First Presbyterian Church).

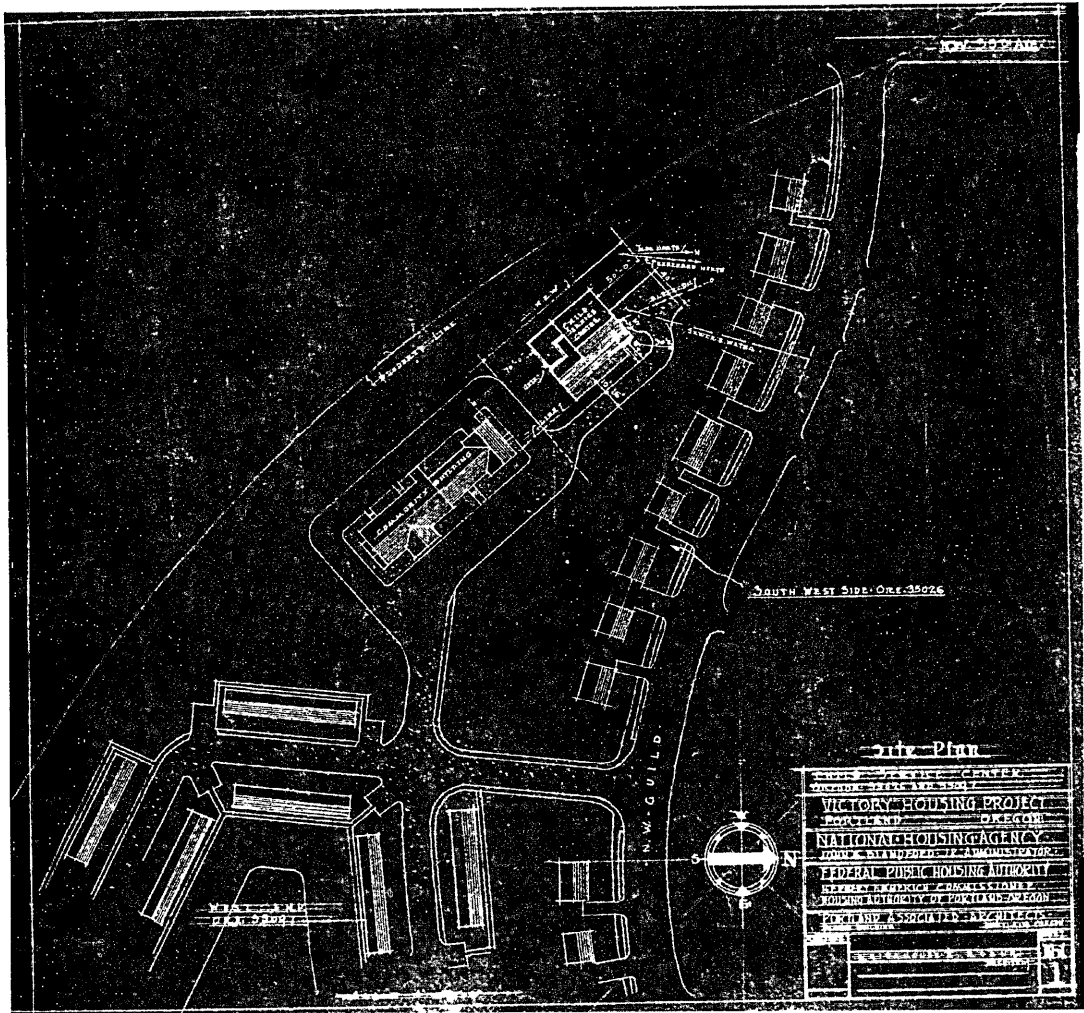


Figure 4-8. (blueprint) Site Plan for the first community center, “Guild’s Street Community Center,” at Guild’s Lake Courts “Victory Housing Project” includes a few of the “electric units” along NW Guild Street. Courtesy of the Oregon Historical Society

The Oregon Historical Society’s Morris Whitehouse collection includes evidence that he also designed at least one of the single-family homes of the Gartrell Group (named for HAP’s first chairman, C. M. Gartrell) that was part of the Gartrell Lot/Lease Plan for public housing. Completed in 1943, the Gartrell Group consisted of 725 HAP dwelling units on fifty-two scattered sites of city-owned land.⁴⁵ In the

documents from 1942, the name “Guild’s Lake Courts” often refers only to Division 35026 (the electric units), with its distinctive, alphabetical courts of five single-family dwellings along the inner ring of the horseshoe and eight duplexes along the outer ring.

William Lescaze’s 1935 Williamsburg Houses in Brooklyn, New York (an expression of the International style), sported super-blocks turned at fifteen-degree angles to the traditional street grid, creating an “abrupt schism between the geometry of the project and the surrounding area.”⁴⁶ Pietro Belluschi’s 1942 design for the public housing complex McLoughlin Heights in Vancouver, Washington, also abandoned the street grid and, like two Portland defense housing projects, Columbia Villa and Guild’s Lake Courts, softened the vistas with rows of dwellings along curving streets. These curves were a West Coast adaptation used in many California defense housing sites as well, such as Marin City, a few miles north of San Francisco. This design combines sweeping curvilinear streets with nearly linear arterial streets, truncating from the curve in an almost tree-like organic structure, with housing units on the ends of each branch.

On the blueprints for the electric units, Whitehouse designated the initial 358 units as “Victory Housing Project.” This concept of “Victory Homes” was represented by the V-shaped element beams supporting the roofline over the porch (see Figure 4-9). Occupants were fully aware of the meaning of the massive “V.” This architectural adornment is reminiscent of the patriotic symbols of fifty simple stars Whitehouse had used as embellishment on the entry doors of the Gus J. Solomon U.S. Courthouse

(located at 620 SW Main Street in Portland), a federal building he had designed in 1931.



Figure 4-9. (photo) Porch of a duplex electric unit showing the “V for Victory” support beams. Courtesy of William Wier Hillgaertner.

Although the design of the 358 “dwelling units in the Guild’s Lake area off the Linnton Road” are attributed to the firm Whitehouse & Church, Architects, Church was absent from the firm from 1942 to 1944, working as a senior architect for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, as was architect Earl Presley Newberry, making it very unlikely that they had any involvement in the design.⁴⁷ It is possible that other employees in the firm, particularly Frank G. Roehr, worked as the architect in the field in the 1942 post-design of the Victory housing and the community center. Two associates of note became partners in 1944 after the passing of Whitehouse: Earl P.

Newberry and Frank G. Roehr. From 1942 to 1944, Earl Newberry was absent from the firm where he had been working since 1925, rising up within in the firm to the level of associate in Whitehouse & Church in 1939. He was working as a senior architect for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, as did Church, making it very unlikely that they had any involvement in the design of Guild's Lake Courts. Perhaps the concept had been a private housing development that the Whitehouse firm had been conceptualizing before the war, and was re-designed to meet federal guidelines.

The defense housing series of Whitehouse drawings consists of sixty-three sheets of Victory housing blueprints; four blueprints are directly pertinent to this research. Whitehouse was offered the contract to design another division after designing the electric units, but his firm was unable fulfill that request. While many of the multi-family dwelling unit interior designs appear to be generic federal defense housing layouts, the exteriors have a bit more of a regional feel. Whitehouse's multi-family units were row houses and there were a few variations; for example, some had second stories, a sharp contrast to designs by firms involved in later efforts. A few row house designs at Guild's Lake Courts appear to be carbon copies of Vancouver's defense housing and refer to the duplicity of the floor plans for the four-plexes at Guild's Lake Courts and the undisclosed site if the matching Vancouver row-housing types, which were alphabetized (see Maps Appendix 5; Division 35059 used some type E, which had second floors, and a number of divisions used type F) in the ledger notes, indicating that there was cross-pollination of the various defense housing communities on the West Coast. There are also other materials in which it appears that

residential units from prior designs were repeated as single-family dwellings at Guild's Lake Courts. The drawings may have been replicated as building on the site progressed. The survival of only one site plan in the collection, which failed to even detail all of division 35026, is disappointing, but may indicate that the architects were required to design the units prior to acquisition of the land. If this is the case, that the architects were designing on blank slates with no initial considerations for site geography, then these structures are truly deserving of the label "manufactured homes." As the electric units were sensitive to the geography of the site, it can be speculated that there was a vision for more long-term use in their conception than the units constructed afterwards, which were more temporary in nature. The site plan's "electric units" were more organic, "sensitive" to privacy between units and to the mountain views.



Figure 4-10. (photo) Looking into one of the courtyards of the electric units, 1944. Note the phone booth. Photographer Leonard Delano. Courtesy of the City of Portland Archives.

The Leads on Other Architects of Guild's Lake Courts

Table 4-1 refers to a number of noteworthy architects. Other sources of information are needed to verify that these architects and contractors indeed worked on the Guild's Lake Courts project; Plate 40 in *Glimpses from the Past* has some differences in the contractors for the divisions and with the exception of Morris H. Whitehouse only lists "Portland Associated Architects" in the architect column for each division of Guild's Lake Courts, although the architect for every other defense housing project in Portland is listed in both sources.⁴⁸

The drawings archived at the Special Collections and University Archives of the University of Oregon Libraries in Eugene, Oregon, which appears to be a very comprehensive collection of local designs, includes a number of promising leads. For

example, a collection of files on Harry Albert Herzog, the architect of Franklin High School, includes renderings for a defense housing project listed as “project FPHA Ore. 35027 for HAP.” Those appear to only be drawings for Hudson Street Homes, yet it would be worth double-checking. This archive also includes architectural drawings and sketches of Herman Brookman, as well as a number of unidentified war housing project files. Sutton & Whitney designed the Masonic Temple on SW Park Avenue and a number of Portland area hospitals; the collection in Eugene includes an interior of an unidentified day nursery, a potential lead to prove their involvement of the design of division 35096 at Guild’s Lake Courts. Richard Sundeleaf designed the pools and other features of Jantzen Beach (1928). There are records of a children’s home for the Federal Public Housing Authority; since Sundeleaf is not attributed to any HAP development other than Guild’s Lake Courts, this undated architectural record might be evidence of his involvement in the design of defense housing other than that in Vancouver, Washington, listed as “Victory Housing.” In the case of every architect other than Morris H. Whitehouse, there are no definitive answers regarding their input into the design of Guild’s Lake Courts and further research is needed.

Conclusion

How could the work of so many notable architects of the era on the design of Guild’s Lake Courts fail to assist in the preservation of memory? The erasure from memory of the design work at Guild’s Lake Courts is baffling. That fact that Morris Whitehouse was involved should have ensured the development a place in

architectural history. Morris Whitehouse (who is in the same league as A. E. Doyle, Pietro Belluschi, William M. Whidden and Ion Lewis) was involved in this effort at the end of his career, adding to an understanding of the breadth and depth of his decades of work in Portland. The blueprints that exist fail to prevent erasure of the site because they were titled simply “Victory Housing” with almost no indication of geographic placement had they been titled “Guild’s Lake Courts” would the erasure from memory been less complete?

The eight federal defense housing divisions, two of which were designed by Morris Whitehouse, in the Slabtown neighborhood and Guild’s Lake District of Portland became the greater community of Guild’s Lake Courts. Even though this community lasted for a decade before it was replaced by industrial uses, it has largely disappeared from the collective consciousness. The pre-industrial image of the area that has survived is not the marshlands or the defense housing project, but the 1905 Lewis & Clark Exposition. The defense housing projects of World War II, like Kittredge and Doane lakes, have been forgotten.

The Federal Public Housing Authority (FPHA) was instigating large construction expansions to rapidly increase the number of units allocated in defense housing developments within a short timeframe, as was the case with Guild’s Lake Courts. The original plans for Vanport City “called for 6,022 units, but work on the project was only three days old when FPHA allocated 3,900 more to the Kaiser Company.”⁴⁹ The original Vanport architectural firm Wolff & Phillips was rehired to draft plans for the new units at Vanport and for one of the site expansions at Guild’s

Lake Courts. The final product was so dissimilar to traditional housing that these two developments, the large swaths of row houses, are referred to as “crackerbox” housing by E. Kimbark MacColl.⁵⁰ Guild’s Lake Courts was never a self-sufficient district, unlike Vanport, which was a community that offered (in addition to the community centers and schools available at Guild’s Lake Courts) a post office, fire stations, a library, an infirmary, a theater, and four commercial shopping centers.⁵¹ Yet unlike Vanport—the largest housing project ever built in the United States, which operated for six years—Guild’s Lake Courts—the nation’s eighth largest public housing project that operated for nine years—was intentionally established and operated to be overlooked. Guild’s Lake Courts and Vanport could be rapidly deconstructed but only Vanport was national news.

Efforts by the real estate industry to prevent the potential long-term impacts of a lasting residential community in the Guild’s Lake District succeeded. The desire from a public relations perspective for HAP was to avoid discourse about race, and with the focus of the media aimed at Vanport, HAP successfully masked the existence of the smaller but still sizable community of 10,000 individuals at Guild’s Lake Courts and the 2,000 African Americans that lived within just beyond Kittridge Avenue. Guild’s Lake Courts was minimized within the qualitative charts under eight separate housing divisions, hidden statistically and actively glossed over in the 1940s, these efforts by HAP to avoid conflict and reticence attributed to the later memory loss.

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- ¹ Carl Abbott, *Portland: Planning, Politics, and Growth in a Twentieth-Century City* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983), 37.
- ² Kathy Tucker, "Guild's Lake," *The Oregon Encyclopedia*. 2008, http://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/entry/view/guild_s_lake/ (accessed 21 Sep 2009); "Kittridge Aquatic Habitat," *Portland Bureau of Environmental Services*, n.d., <http://www.portlandonline.com/bes/watershedapp/index.cfm?action=DisplayContent&SubWatershedID=8&SectionID=1&SubjectID=3&TopicID=26> (accessed 21 Sep 2009); Kathleen D. Tucker, "We Want Smokestacks not Swamps," unpublished draft, Master of History, Portland State University (2005), p. 86; "Doane Aquatic Habitat," *Portland Bureau of Environmental Services*, n.d., <http://www.portlandonline.com/bes/watershedapp/index.cfm?action=DisplayContent&SubjectID=3&TopicID=26&SubTopicID=0&SectionID=1&SubWatershedID=1> (accessed 21 Sep 2009).
- ³ "St. Helens Road in 1891," Oregon Historical Society photograph, CN # 35877.
- ⁴ http://www.ohs.org/education/oregonhistory/historical_records/dspDocument.cfm?doc_ID=000021BC-DAD-1DBE-BB38805272FE9F (accessed 26 July 2010).
- ⁵ "Guild's Lake looking northwest in about 1900," Oregon Historical Society neg., OrHi 36769.
- ⁶ E. Kimbark MacColl, *Shaping the City: Business and Politics in Portland, Oregon, 1885-1915* (Portland, OR: Georgian Press, 1976), 266.
- ⁷ *Ibid.*, 261. The number of individuals was less than these numbers would indicate at first glance. The visitor count is a gate count and is not adjustable to compensate for individuals who visited the fair on multiple occasions.
- ⁸ This was the first large-scale introduction of plywood as a construction material.
- ⁹ Abbott, *Portland*, 41.
- ¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 42.
- ¹¹ Tucker, "We Want Smokestacks not Swamps," 32.
- ¹² "St. John's Theater & Pub," *McMenamin's*, n.d, <http://www.mcmenamins.com/226-st-johns-theater-pub-home>.
- ¹³ Listed on the National Register 5 May 2000, also known as the Evergreen Apartments.
- ¹⁴ MacColl, *Shaping the City*, 310.
- ¹⁵ Carl Abbott, *The Great Extravaganza: Portland and the Lewis and Clark Exposition* (Portland, OR: Oregon Historical Society, 1996), 72.
- ¹⁶ Tucker, "We Want Smokestacks not Swamps," 13.
- ¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 46.
- ¹⁸ MacColl, *Shaping the City*, 342.
- ¹⁹ Kathy Tucker, "Guild's Lake Area 1930," *The Oregon History Project*, Oregon Historical Society, www.ohs.org (accessed 4 Oct. 2009).
- ²⁰ Tucker, "We Want Smokestacks not Swamps," 49.
- ²¹ Richard Engeman, "Wapato Bog to Industrial Sanctuary: The Transformation of Portland's Guild's Lake," www.history.pdx.edu/guildslake/ (accessed 9 Oct. 2009).
- ²² Tucker, "We Want Smokestacks not Swamps," 59.
- ²³ Kathleen Tucker attributes the article "Proposal for Filling the Guild's Lake Area with Material to be Dredged from the Channel West of Swan Island" to James B. Kerr and coins the term "Kerr's plan."
- ²⁴ *Ibid.*, 83.
- ²⁵ George Krammer, "The WWII Homefront in Portland-Vancouver: Defense Workers Housing Projects: A Historic Context Overview." Prepared January 2003 for the Housing Authority of Portland in connection with the Columbia Villa/ Hope VI Project, p. 37.
- ²⁶ Belluschi had worked previously in the architectural firm of A. E. Doyle in Portland and went on to be the dean of the school of Architecture at MIT.
- ²⁷ "War Housing Plan Approved," *The Oregonian*, 1 April 1942, Sec 1: p. 1.
- ²⁸ John Cramer, "Local Defense Homes Designs to Be Drawn by City's Architects," *The Oregonian*, November 23, 1941.

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- ²⁹ Krammer, "The WWII Homefront in Portland-Vancouver," 30.
- ³⁰ HAP Files Housing Authority of Portland Information Division, "History of the Housing Authority of Portland, Oregon, April 1945," p. 2. City of Portland Archives, Minutes, A2001-025 0605-01, Record Series 0605-08, 1940–1951.
- ³¹ HAP Files Housing Authority of Portland Information Division, "Selection of Architects for Additional 1,000 Units, September 9, 1943," City of Portland Archives, Minutes, Record Series 0605-08, 1940–1951.
- ³² Ibid.
- ³³ Ibid.
- ³⁴ Minutes of the Housing Authority of Portland, Oregon, "Future Housing Program held January 29, 1943." Minutes, Record Series 0605-08, 1940–1951. HAP Files, City of Portland Archives. Commissioner Moore was not convinced that there would be more construction of housing units in Portland as there is a note attached to the September 9, 1943, minutes recording that he bet Chairman Gartrell five dollars that the war would end before housing units could be completed.
- ³⁵ A. D. Taylor, "Kingsford Heights: Some Problems of Design for Prefabricated Housing," *The New Pencil Points* XXIII, no. 10 (October 1942): 59.
- ³⁶ Gene W. Rossman, *History of the Housing Authority of Portland, OR, 1941–1973* (Portland, OR: Oregon Historical Society [MSS 1431], c. 1973), Exhibit IV, 51.
- ³⁷ T. Vaughan and G. McMath, *A Century of Portland Architecture* (Portland: Oregon Historical Society, 1967), 155.
- ³⁸ William J. Hawkins and William F. Willingham, *Classic Houses of Portland, Oregon: 1850–1950* (Portland, OR: Timber Press, 1999), 486.
- ³⁹ E. Kimbark MacColl, *The Growth of a City: Power and Politics in Portland, Oregon, 1915–1950* (Portland, OR: Georgian Press, 1979), 357.
- ⁴⁰ The Oregon Historical Society Research Library has almost the entire collection of Morris H. Whitehouse blueprints (Organized Lot 321). These architectural pictures and drawings are maintained at the society's facility in Gresham at 8905 NE San Rafael St.
- ⁴¹ Andrew N. Bryans, "Guide to the Morris H. Whitehouse Architectural Collection, circa 1905–1974," *Northwest Digital Archives*, 2004, <http://nwda-db.wsulibs.wsu.edu/findaid/ark:/80444/xv29419> (accessed 21 Sep 2009).
- ⁴² "A Brief History of NCMN," *National College of Natural Medicine*, <http://www.ncnm.edu/about-ncnm/history.php> (accessed 21 Sep 2009).
- ⁴³ Hawkins and Willingham, *Classic Houses of Portland, Oregon*, 334, 484.
- ⁴⁴ Richard Ritz, *Oregon Architects: A Biographical Dictionary of Architects, Deceased, 19th and 20th Centuries*. Portland, OR: Lair Hill Publishing, 2002), 421.
- ⁴⁵ The architects on record as part of the various Gartrell Plan Units are Margaret Fritsch, Richard Sundeleaf, Dougan & Heims, Herman Brockman (structure still standing), R. D. Kennedy, Wade Pipes, Stanton & Johnson, and Annand & Kennedy.
- ⁴⁶ Richard Plunz, *A History of Housing in New York City* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 218.
- ⁴⁷ John M. Richardson, "Houses for War Workers," *The Oregon Journal*, 13 Sep 1942, Sec D, p. 8 (images of the project in this article); Ritz, *Oregon Architects*, 421–422, 338, 297–298, 74.
- ⁴⁸ Richard Sanders, *Glimpses from the Past: The Housing Authority of Portland, Fifty Years of Building* (Portland, OR: Housing Authority of Portland, 1991), 34.
- ⁴⁹ Manly Maben, *Vanport* (Portland: Oregon Historical Society Press, 1987), 11.
- ⁵⁰ MacColl, *The Growth of a City*, 580.
- ⁵¹ Margaret Crawford, "Daily Life on the Home Front: Women, Blacks, and the Struggle for Public Housing." In *World War II and the American Dream*, edited by Donald Albrecht (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995), 122.

CHAPTER 5:

MOVING INTO GUILD'S LAKE COURTS

Introduction

The first residents moved into the limited number of electrified units at Guild's Lake Courts in October 1942. The northernmost section was reserved for African Americans; the area consisted of two of the eight sections of the housing project and they were the last to be made available to rent and were first occupied in March 1943. The first residents to move in occupied a quaint courtyard grouping. The residents of these electric units and residents of neighboring private homes watched the development of Guild's Lake Courts, transforming a barren landscape into vast expanse of pre-fabricated row house units for as far as the eye could see (see Figure 5-1). Units for African Americans were so far from the other sections of Guild's Lake that one resident, Thorton Lorenzo, commented at a reunion that he "didn't know there was any white folks in Guild's Lake."¹ Even in the aerial view below (see Figure 5-1), it is very difficult to make out the housing occupied by the African American community, because it is in the far upper-middle edge of the image between the mountain and the river, just beyond the oil tank farms and train tracks.

Lorenzo's perspective was not unique to African American residents. Some of the white residents interviewed prior to the reunion had only learned of the African American members of the development from images brought to the interviews intended to stimulate memories. Others perceived that African Americans first arrived in the summer of 1948, a point when the racially divided housing first integrated as

part of crisis management, not as part of a planned effort to desegregate. Whites were often afraid they would be perceived as racists and some asked for their comments of surprise not to be included in the transcripts. African Americans moving into Guild's Lake Courts came from Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, and Texas² whereas whites interviewed migrated from more Northern states like Missouri, North Dakota, Iowa, Wisconsin, Minnesota, and rural Oregon and Washington. The residents were often clustered regionally within defense housing, a consequence of trainloads of passengers from a given state arriving and queuing up for the housing waitlist at the same time.



Figure 5-1. (photo) Aerial view of Guild's Lake Courts possibly taken from Montgomery Ward's roof facing Northeast, c. 1944, commissioned by Hal Lidell. Photographer Hugh Ackroyd, who owned and operated a photography studio in Guild's Lake District. Courtesy of Thomas Robinson.

The Housing Authority of Portland (HAP) managed more housing between 1942 and 1943 than any other single housing authority in the nation; in 1946 this vast expanse of units was operated as an affordable housing opportunity as units were removed from the developments in an erratic manner. In the 1940s, only two of the twenty-five developments operated by HAP allowed African American residents. After V-J Day in 1945, defense housing nationally was privatized, demolished, or converted into low-income federal housing. Despite the end of the war, housing in Portland remained in critically short supply. By 1947, 236 units that had been slated for deactivation at Guild's Lake Courts were reactivated and were undergoing repairs for use as veterans' housing.³ Many Caucasian single mothers, African American families, and returning Japanese and African American veterans of the U.S. armed forces were marginalized in Portland's private housing market, and for these individuals, federal housing had the most promise.

The HAP board members were not housing reformers and had no interest in operating public housing after the defense industry completed its mission. Rather, they were investors who represented real estate interests and were waiting to resume development opportunities after the war. These men supported the industrialization of the leased land and relocation of Guild's Lake Courts residents to Vanport, exercising a combination of greed and racial prejudice that spurred redevelopment at all the defense housing developments except for the 400 permanent units at Columbia Villa and a few other scattered locations (HAP policies and activities are discussed in more detail in chapter nine).

Some of the individuals who attended the Guild's Lake Courts reunions in 2007 and 2008 had compartmentalized the various sections of Guild's Lake Courts as distinctly different housing projects and did not personally classify some sections of the project as even being part of Guild's Lake Courts. In the recollections offered to the interviewer, individual relocations within Guild's Lake Courts had for many participants become part of a history of complete relocations to other distinct housing projects. This can be attributed to the fact that Guild's Lake Courts housing was non-contiguous, and over time different sections of the development became referenced by residents by their individual court or street names.⁴ If one was trying to tell someone where one lived within the community, it was logical to refer to the street or court name or nearby community center because many sections within the development were miles apart and had significant undeveloped gaps. Unlike Vanport, Guild's Lake Courts lacked the sense of a discrete site and common identity.

The expansive geography was especially telling for children and those with limited access to automobile transportation; many of the interviewees were young children when they lived in the development and had limited ability to fathom its true extent. The development was so massive that cars and bikes were advantageous; in this era, public housing designers assumed that residents would own cars and so set aside ample curbside parking spaces. Many families owned a car (see Figure 5-2); cars were parked on both sides of the development's streets facing the same direction, possibly indicating that the streets were one-way. There was no need for children to

play in the streets of the development since there was plenty of open space free of cars.



Figure 5-2. (photo cropped) Row houses at Guild's Lake Courts with Montgomery Wards in the distance, c. 1944. Image of units in Guam Court, west of NW 35th Ave. Photographer Leonard Delano. Courtesy of the City of Portland Archives.

In May 1948, the flow of residents from Guild's Lake Courts to Vanport suddenly reversed when Vanport was destroyed by flooding, leaving 18,700 people displaced, some of whom were redirected to shelter at Guild's Lake Courts.⁵ Figure 5-3 shows the water covering most of the Vanport site, a catastrophe that could have very well been replicated at Guild's Lake Courts had engineers not successfully stabilized the flood plain, railroad berm, and marshlands of the Guild's Lake District. A cleared site on a swath of leased land where housing had been dismantled as early

as 1944 was re-appropriated for 400 federal surplus trailer units brought in to house flood evacuees (see figures 5-10 and 5-11). Tragically, Portland's unusual use of leased land, which had kept construction prices low, became a liability for the now seriously weakened housing authority. Guild's Lake Courts was already "a victim of dismantling," in the words of HAP's historian Richard Sanders.⁶ After the Vanport Flood, the rush to expedite dismantling programs became the symbol of callousness of HAP policymakers.⁷



Figure 5-3. (photo) This view of Vanport, taken facing west from North Denver Avenue, appears to have been misdated: the waters from the May 30, 1948, flood should have receded more after two weeks. Courtesy of the City of Portland Archives.

Wartime, 1942–1944: Relocating for War Effort Employment

One of the earliest sections to come on line in 1942 were the 358 coveted electric homes. The variation between the design, site plans, and construction of the

electric units situated on their attractive courts, and the thousands of row houses built with less care and increasingly inferior materials in a successful effort to economize dwelling production, is detailed in chapter four. Since many residents, like John Sweeny, were unaccustomed to electrification, they had some fantastic notions about the limited number of homes with electric appliances:

John Sweeney: [M]y doctor was in the electric area and then I went to see Miss Poor who was an evangelist ... and had kind of Bible studies and stuff.

Tanya March: And she was in an electric unit as well?

John Sweeney: Yeah. Went in there and looked around, you know, and she says "What's wrong?" so I told her about my visions of the electric houses; you know the electric chair and the electric bed.

Tanya March: The electric chair and the electric bed...

John Sweeney: Oh yeah. She says, "No." She opened a door and the other kids were kind of laughing, so she did a little tour of the house, see, there's the bedroom, there's no electric bed; and there's the bathroom and there's no electric chair for the toilet and, you know....⁸

Electrification was still a novelty especially for migrants from rural areas, and many homes were being electrified for the first time. Recent New Deal efforts had dammed the Columbia River and enabled Northwest of the United States to electrify industry and housing at an unprecedented rate. Politicians from Oregon, U.S. Senator Charles McNary and U.S. Representative Charles Martin, fought to get the Bonneville Dam constructed, and their success ensured a supply power to Portland and serendipitously created the opportunity for vast employment in the 1940s. Martin and McNary prevailed over PWA chief Harold Ickes, who had only supported the construction of the Grand Coulee Dam.⁹ All dwellings constructed at Guild's Lake Courts had electric

lights and for some migrants fresh running water, and would have been the first dwellings with these modern amenities.

At Guild's Lake Courts African American residents were last to move in, and their housing was of the lowest quality. The shipyard recruiting of African Americans did not start until 1943, perhaps as white rural migration to urban industrial centers was dropping off. Some of the African American dwellings were literally on the other side of the tracks, as can be seen in Figure 5-4; the other units that were not across Yeon Avenue do not appear in this aerial. The image, possibly taken from the hillside above in 1944, also shows the active Kaiser Shipyard on Swan Island. There was no reference to other minority groups living in HAP housing before 1948 in the archival materials available. Race relations in Portland were tenuous even before the influx of African Americans. Before the construction of Guild's Lake Courts, the federal government (under the direction of local government) had sent the city's Japanese to internment camps and Portland's government relocated the Gypsy population out of the city.¹⁰ The small Japanese population which came back to Portland after the war were unable to return to Little Tokyo (now "Old Town"). Some Japanese returning from detention camps relocated to Vanport after the war and led fellow residents to believe that they were of Chinese decent.¹¹

Funding to build housing was being restricted just as minorities arrived in 1943. The Vancouver Housing Authority (VHA) rented on a first-come, first-served basis at all six of its developments. (Despite this policy, two projects—Bagley Downs and Burton Homes—had higher concentrations of African Americans.) In contrast, the

Housing Authority of Portland (HAP) employed separate waiting lists for whites and African Americans—which meant that African American families had to wait until a unit in the segregated housing area became available. Not coincidentally, these were the units with the fewest amenities. The cost to build each unit at Guild’s Lake Court (including some land costs and the cost to construct community facilities) was \$2,387 vs. the cost of \$3,568 to build a permanent unit at Columbia Villa, both figures significantly less than the \$4,411.66 per unit limit placed on private developers by the Federal Housing Administration to construct the total 102 apartment units at Iris and Maple-Mallory Court Apartments, these structure built in 1948 were transferred to HAP in 1958.¹² These scant apartments hardly filled the void created when in 1959 Hudson Street Homes the last standing temporary war housing development in Portland was demolished.¹³

Larger families would sometimes be housed in these multi-family structures by using two units. Apparently to save on construction costs, instead of building units of various sizes, the housing authority would combine two row-house units, installing a kitchen and bathroom in only one unit and creating an opening between that unit and the next. This indicates that the units were quite flexible; residents never expressed any knowledge in the interviews that they lived in a unit that had been adapted. The adaptability of units to accommodate a variety of family sizes was a built in asset.



Figure 5-4. (photo) The west sector of the African American section of the Guild's Lake Courts development. Includes Gona Street Community Center. Photographer Leonard Delano. Courtesy of the City of Portland Archives.

Individuals who relocated to Guild's Lake Courts during the war years were part of a mass migration of Americans seeking lucrative employment opportunities. According to Wallace Turner of *The Oregonian*, at the end of 1944 there were 9,144 residents officially living in Guild's Lake Courts, and this housing was a response to the City of Portland's extreme housing shortage: "workers when they first came to Portland had to sleep on park benches, in tents—anywhere they could."¹⁴ The housing that was rapidly built for these workers was a great equalizer: The cramped conditions in the housing units were the same whether a family had previously lived in a single-family house, a lumber company housing unit, or a sharecropper lean-to. Residents were willing to embrace this non-traditional housing as part of a community-wide civilian push to win the war. It is worth mentioning that residents of both races came from families of all class backgrounds.

Arnold Leppert's father, for example, moved his wife and two children from North Dakota so he could keep his family together while he worked in the war industry. Leppert had previous experience in the metal trades, so he qualified as a skilled worker. The family lived in Guild's Lake Courts from 1943 to 1950, making Arnold Leppert and his sister Marjorie Leppert (Nordling) the longest-tenured residents to participate in this research project.¹⁵ When the Leppert family first arrived they stayed with a relative on SE 17th Street because Vanport housing was fully occupied. They placed their name on the waiting list for Guild's Lake Courts and after some months moved into a unit on NW Manila Avenue. The two-bedroom dwelling had a single bathroom, a living room, a dining area, and a kitchen with an icebox and a coal stove. Arnold described the housing unit as cramped, with paper-thin walls. His mother somehow made room for the piano they had brought along, but many of their other furnishings were bought secondhand in Portland. Arnold remembers the tin shower and that he was lucky not to have to share a bedroom with his sister. She married another North Dakota migrant living in Guild's Lake Courts and the couple moved to their own unit at Guild's Lake Courts. The young couple was lucky, to get one of the coveted electrified units. Arnold told me: "I would go over to their unit, and the floors were beautiful, and the rugs. They were a modern couple, and they had a radio. It was nice. She worked for Consolidated Freightways."¹⁶

Another former resident of Guild's Lake Courts, Irene C. Squires kept a detailed scrapbook covering the years that her family lived there, including documents from just before the move.¹⁷ One such document was Clifford Squires's draft notice;

he had been ordered to report to the federal building in Enid, Oklahoma, on December 8, 1942. There is no record of why he did not enter the Army but one could infer that the draft notice led to the family relocating to Oregon, where by gaining employment in the defense industry Mr. Squires could continue to provide for his family.

In spite of these instructions, it appears that Mr. Squires did not wait until there were units ready prior to moving his new wife (and her children from her first marriage) to Portland from Oklahoma. Irene's scrapbook contains an incomplete collection of the family's ration books; one belonging to her child, Floyd A. Squires, lists his residence as 7343 SE 48th Avenue, Portland, Oregon, the only indication of their address in Portland prior to Guild's Lake Courts. On July 28, 1943, Clifford Squires signed the first of two leases at Guild's Lake Courts. The rent for the five-room unit at 3905 NW Guam Court was 46 dollars a month (see Figure 5-5).

Clifford Squires was thirty years old when he started work as a painter for Willamette Iron and Steel Corporation on April 20, 1943.¹⁸ The company handbook he received that day, prepared by Portland Public Schools Division of Vocational Education in 1942, offered forty pages of advice for new employees. In regard to housing, it states:

The housing department is located in the personnel department for the convenience of employees and their families. Register any houses, apartments, housekeeping rooms, sleeping rooms and rooms with board that you may have. Go to this department when seeking housing, rooms or boarding places. Many heartaches and disappointments can be avoided if every employee will use this housing department and cooperate in this vital matter. Portland and the surrounding area are suffering an acute shortage of housing for new workers and their families. Great strides have been made in meeting this problem and plans call for thousands of units in

the near future, but for the sake of you and your families, please do not expect too much too soon. Leave your family where it is, if at all possible; to bring it to Portland and then be forced to live in quarters detrimental to its health and happiness only complicates a situation, which might have been avoided.¹⁹

**NATIONAL HOUSING AGENCY
FEDERAL PUBLIC HOUSING AUTHORITY
Washington, D. C.**

DWELLING LEASE

(For Army and Navy Enlisted and Civilian Personnel and Industrial Workers)

FEDERAL PUBLIC HOUSING ADMINISTRATOR
Washington, D. C.

By: Housing Authority of Portland, Oregon

Guilford Lake
(Development)

DEVELOPMENT NO. 25026

DWELLING 3905 N. W. Guam Ct.

LEASE NO. 888 Unit #1095

THIS LEASE, made the 23rd day of July, 1945 by and between the United States of America (herein called the "Landlord") and Clifford H. Squires (herein called the "Tenant"), WHEREAS that the Landlord, relying upon the representations of the Tenant, as to his household composition, and employment in defense activity, does hereby let to the Tenant, and the Tenant hereby hires upon the conditions hereinafter provided, 5 rooms and bath, located at 3905 N. W. Guam Ct. (Street) (Number) called the "premises") to be occupied exclusively as a private residence by the Tenant and his family, and eligible lodgers when authorized by the management, for the term of one calendar month beginning on the first day of August, 1945, and ending at midnight on the last day thereof, at the rental of \$46.00 for said term payable promptly in advance.

The Tenant shall have the right to occupy the premises during the period from 7/23/45 to the commencement of the term hereof under and subject to the same conditions as are set forth herein except that a full month's rent shall be paid in advance at the time the lease is signed. The rent from 7/23/45 to the commencement of the term hereof shall be \$5.24 and shall be payable by the Tenant on the first day of the term of this lease.

This lease may be automatically renewed for successive terms of one calendar month; provided that the Landlord may terminate this lease, or any renewal thereof, upon any day during any such term by giving the Tenant not less than 30 days' prior notice in writing. The Tenant may terminate this lease, or any renewal thereof, upon any day during any such term upon not less than 15 days' prior notice in writing to the Landlord, or upon such shorter notice as may be acceptable to the management. If the Tenant is engaged in military service and is transferred to another station, this lease may be terminated on 1 days' notice. If this lease shall be terminated pursuant to any of the provisions of this paragraph such portion of the rent for the full term, theretofore paid by the Tenant, as represents rent for the period from the date of termination to and including the last day of the calendar month shall be deemed in excess of rent and refunded to the Tenant; provided the Tenant has fulfilled all his obligations under this lease or any renewal thereof.

Any failure by the Tenant to pay punctually any rent or other charges when due or any breach of any other condition of this lease shall, at the option of the Landlord, terminate all rights of the Tenant hereunder and thereupon the Landlord, its representatives, agents, or assigns, shall have the right, without further demand or notice, to re-enter and take possession of the premises. The Tenant hereby waives any and all notice and demand for possession and agrees that upon any such failure or breach, the Landlord may immediately re-enter the premises and dispossess the Tenant without legal notice or the institution of any legal proceedings whatever.

No Member of or Delegate to the Congress shall be admitted to any share or part of this contract or agreement, or to any benefit to arise therefrom.

All of the terms and conditions appearing on the reverse side of this instrument are specifically made a part of this lease. This lease evidences the entire agreement between the Landlord and the Tenant, and no modification thereof shall be valid unless in writing and signed by the management.

Clifford H. Squires
(Tenant)

In the presence of:

Figure 5-5. (document) Clifford H. Squires' lease for 3905 NW Guam Court. From the Squire family scrapbook. It is unusual to retain this sort of record in a family scrapbook. Courtesy of a private collection.

Ration books listing the Guild’s Lake Courts address for all three children in the household: Marla Jean (Squires) Wood, age twelve; Floyd Arthur Squires, age ten; and Mary Ellen Wood, age five. On July 29, 1943, Irene Squires quit her job as a machine operator at Rheem Manufacturing Company, located on nearby NW Yeon Avenue, because she had no one to care for her youngest child (it is interesting that this occurred simultaneously with their move to Guild’s Lake Courts). There was childcare at Guild’s Lake Courts, but she might not have been willing to try what was still a novel childrearing practice. According to historian William Tuttle, the nurseries funded by the 1941 Lanham Act were underutilized initially because mothers were not accustomed to leaving their younger children with strangers and feared the social stigma then associated with non-family caregivers. The nurseries nationally became more acceptable by 1945 and remained funded until March 1946.²⁰

Table 5-1. Key of known addresses for resident participants.

Family Name	Address in Guild’s Lake Courts
Charnquist	3327 NW Guam (3404 NW Manila)
Daniels	44 th Court
Hilger	3735 NW Guam Court
Hillgaertner	3218 NW Guam
Hurd	3160 NW Wake Place
Kelly	3035 NW Guild’s
Larson	3218 NW Luzon
Lauinger	3573 NW Luzon
Leppert	3311 NW Luzon (NW Manila)
Locke	44 th Court
Meskel	3217 NW Luzon
Mosley	NW Luzon
Pettitt	NW 35 th Avenue
Rose	3727 NW Luzon
Squires	3905 NW Guam Court
Sweeney	NW Guam (3700 block)

HAP documents indicate that furnishings and appliances were available to tenants willing to pay higher rents, yet not a single interviewee recalls any furnishings, and only the electrified units had the very desirable modern appliances. It was not unusual for a family to move multiple times within the Guild's Lake Courts community. It can be safely assumed that each move before 1946 was an effort by the family to improve its location or unit size. Smaller families in particular attempted to live in the electrified units, since these units would not meet the needs of larger families. Another list of issues that motivated onsite relocations can be linked to safety and quality of life—especially a desire to avoid the odors and the danger of the nearby city dump or Standard Oil storage tanks (see Figure 5-1). After 1946 the movement of households within the community was due to “forced” relocations, based on the reclaiming of leased lands within the industrial areas of Guild's Lake District.

Dale Lee Butler's family occupied three different units at Guild's Lake Courts during his family's years there starting in 1943, with a break in Idaho spanning part of 1946 and 1947.²¹ Another resident, Donald Lauinger, arrived in Portland with his parents and brother in 1943; they moved out of their first housing in Guild's Lake Courts at 5373 Luzon Street because of problems with noise.²² Having lived with his parents and brother in places like the Sunset Logging Company in Timber, Oregon, he was accustomed to housing without electricity and only cold running water; he recalls Guild's Lake Courts dwelling units as being of higher quality than places the family had lived before and after.



Figure 5-6. (photo) Bob Hilger and his father enjoying a day off from the Bingham Willamette Shipyards outside their non-electric home at 3735 NW Guam Court. Courtesy of Bob Hilger.

The image of an electrified unit as the normative type of defense housing available in Portland was used to entice families to move across the country to places like Guild's Lake Courts. Bob Hilger's extended family of seven moved into a three-bedroom dwelling in Guild's Lake Courts in 1944. Bob Hilger shared an image of himself pretending to smoke with his father in front of their home at Guild's Lake Courts (see Figure 5-6). His mother found work at Fruit and Flower Day Nursery, and he was sent to the parish school that served the Guild's Lake District and Slabtown neighborhoods, St. Patrick's Catholic School at 1623 NW 19th Street. Hilger, who

was born in Wisconsin, recalls with humor his mother's realization that the housing was going to be less modern than they had been anticipating:

When we got there, we pulled up in front and we were in those four units [four-plex row housing units]. And that's when my mom came in, grabbed the handle on the [coal] stove, and threw the plate down and said: "Electric Stove." (*laughing*) And then went over to the refrigerator and she said: "Refrigerator" (*inflection of sarcasm and humor*) ... and opened it up and there was the big block of ice in there.²³

Hilger's mother had homesteaded up in Canada in the past, so she was resilient, although Guild's Lake Courts was a flashback to that lifestyle.

Linda Daniels (Walton) was three years old in 1944 when her family moved to Guild's Lake Courts. Her father willingly moved all seven children from Texas by train, even though he was made to sign a contract at point of hire in the South stating that they would not stay in Oregon once the war was over.²⁴ He was not deterred by that stipulation because he wanted to return to Texas; they looked at this as temporary housing, as they still owned their farm property in Texas. Walton conjectured that the family would have returned to Texas, like many of the families she knew, had her father been responsible with his wartime earnings. His employer paid for the trip, and the entire family had more space in the two-bedroom unit than they had had back in Texas. The family lived on NW 44th Court until 1950 when they were forced to move out. Walton recalls at this point of her childhood that her family was repeatedly shifted around to various public housing communities within and outside of Guild's Lake Courts as each section they were living in was slated for demolition.

Ronald Pedersen, who lived with his mother and stepfather, recalls that the community was segregated. Interestingly, not all interviewees were as aware of segregation as Ron. This could be attributed to the expansive scale of the development and the fact that St. Patrick's parish school admitted only white children, most of whom were not even aware that African Americans lived in the defense housing units, in contrast to the children like Pedersen who attended the integrated public school. As Pedersen reported based on his experience in the military after the 1948 federal decision to integrate the ranks:

I suppose it was an expedient matter. Because they didn't want any problems, because WWII presented enough problems. I don't think they thought it out right. Oh maybe they did think it out, and maybe the idea was that Southern whites and Southern African Americans weren't going to mix. And they are absolutely erroneous. Do you know why? I'll tell you why, but this may make me sound like a racist. Southern African Americans know how to get along with Southern whites. You know they [Southern African Americans] were subjugated, that was part of their lifestyle down there.... That isn't right but that is just the way things were in 1950 [when he enlisted and observed race relations] and I think that's the way things were in 1942-1945.²⁵

Families were proud to be in living in defense housing during the war.

Working in the defense industries, adult residents of war housing knew that the housing was temporary and that any inadequacies in the housing, like rationing, were assisting the war effort. Some of the fathers of those interviewed were too old to serve their nation abroad and moved to Guild's Lake Courts to assist the war effort and to provide better support for their families. William and Peggy Hillgaertner's father left Missouri and moved his family into one of the electrified units after he was rejected for military service:



Figure 5-7. (photo) William Hillgaertner Sr. holding his baby daughter, c. 1945. Looking at his arm muscles it is hard to imagine that this man was not able to enlist in the armed forces. Courtesy of William Hillgaertner, Jr.

William Hillgaertner: When the U.S. got involved in the war, he went down to enlist...and the army wouldn't have him.

Tanya March: Age...or...?

William Hillgaertner: Underweight.... So, he went to the Navy, and he was underweight. They said try the Marines. He went to the Marines, and they said no.²⁶

The children of these migrants did not dwell on the fact that the housing was temporary, despite the large sign at the entrance with the text: GUILD'S LAKE COURT: TEMPORARY WAR HOUSING PROJECT. No interviewee recalls the location of this sign and it was possibly not present after construction at the site was completed. The large

sign (approx 5'x3'6") is authentic and of the same manufacturing of the sign posted at Columbia Villa and documented in Richard Sanders' *Glimpses from the Past*.²⁷



Figure 5-8. (plywood signage) The original sign once at the entrance to Guild's Lake Courts during construction. Courtesy of the author.

Since there was no predetermined end date to the war, it would be hard to contextualize that the housing was temporary. This hub of transient labor offered opportunities to form lasting connections. For teenagers in particular, the increased freedom and proximity to numerous other young adults made Guild's Lake Courts a beloved home.

Postwar, 1945–1948: Vacant Units Rented as Affordable Housing for Veterans and Single Mothers

During the war years, the practice of public housing authorities to rent units only to defense industry workers was federally mandated. HAP kept lists of companies whose employees qualified for federal public housing. Guild's Lake Courts was the only defense housing community in Portland, other than Vanport, that accepted African Americans. While Vanport residents experienced relative physical isolation from the city, Guild's Lake Courts offered proximity to the Vaughn Street Ball Park, the Montgomery Ward's department store, retail shops along NW 23rd Avenue, movie theaters, an ice-skating rink, and lands now associated with Macleay and Forest Parks (much of this off-site entertainment is discussed in chapter seven). The housing authority maintained separate waiting lists depending on race. It seems that there was very little turnover within the African American community; hence very few units in the "Negro" section became available after the war years, whereas the vacancies in the white section tripled.

The demise of Guild's Lake Courts was made additionally complicated by the shooting death of Ervin Jones, an African American man, at the hands of the Portland police in August 1945.²⁸ This case of mistaken identity cost the life of a husband and father of five children. This murder outraged the African American community for whom the outcome of trial of the officer symbolized Portland's Jim Crow treatment of African Americans. Officer Detective Purcell, who admitted to shooting Jones, and who had no warrant to enter the Joneses' home, did not testify at the inquest.²⁹ The

African American community had anticipated a verdict of negligent homicide.

Because Ervin Jones was African American and the officer was white, the final verdict of justifiable homicide crossed the fine line from *de facto* racism to *de jure* racism.

HAP had always defended segregation at housing projects as a consequence of *de facto* segregation that tenants rather than HAP had perpetrated. After the shooting, the Urban League was organizing project residents to push the court system into action against HAP and end practices now perceived as *de jure* segregation in housing.

Reverend George Brown, of Guild's Lake Courts, acted as a leader within the African American community, voicing the position that there was never a justifiable reason to shoot someone in the back.³⁰ Ervin Jones had armed himself in response to the unprecedented raid on his house; the lawyers for the family argued that he had thought he was being robbed as the police failed to identify themselves. Efforts were made by the Urban League and church groups to challenge that verdict; unfortunately the removal of the African American community at Guild's Lake Courts simply proceeded at a faster rate and traction to fight the verdict slipped away.

Until the fear of racial unrest emerged, HAP had not been actively dismantling this section of Guild's Lake Courts since much of the African American section was not on leased land. HAP records and maps do not delineate where the eighty acres of land they owned at Guild's Lake Courts was. The assumption is that it was the last lands acquired and there was no records of any lease holder complaints against HAP in the African American section, a sharp contrast to the letters of despute pertaining to the extended use of lands for public housing in the areas east of the Kittredge

overpass. Portland historian E. Kimbark MacColl speculated that HAP anticipated unrest and was prepared to expeditiously dismantle the African American section immediately after the verdict was heard.³¹ Three weeks after the distasteful verdict, in October 1945, twenty-eight acres of the publicly held lands of Guild's Lake were sold off, liquidating 252 public housing units, presumably in the African American section of the development.³² This issue of land transfers instigated by the Port of Portland and the HAP's sale of the land to industry is covered in greater detail in chapter nine.

When possible, defense workers who resided at Guild's Lake Courts used their savings to buy homes after the war, and many newcomers who had not accumulated savings looked for work outside of Oregon as the shipyards closed. As wartime families moved on, a second wave of residents moved into Guild's Lake Courts seeking affordable housing in the very tight postwar housing market. Many of these residents were struggling families. Amenities such as childcare and affordable rent were particularly appealing to white single mothers. Individuals who arrived in Guild's Lake Courts in this period had a heightened awareness that the community was temporary. This situation contributed to an overall sense of insecurity among residents, particularly African Americans, who because of racial covenants had limited access to homeownership opportunities because many deeds prohibited sellers from transferring property to African Americans.

HAP intended to gradually dismantle Guild's Lake Courts and relocate residents unable to transition out of public housing on their own to Vanport. Initiated in 1946, this dismantling was carried out in the name of industrial progress, as the

lands had been slated for industrial use ever since the closure of the Lewis & Clark Exposition in 1905. During the construction and design phase every effort had been made by Portland's city council to assure their constituency that the resolution to construct eight thousand homes under the newly created HAP would not create a postwar ghetto, even passing an amendment "to make certain that the temporary houses do not outlive the war emergency by more than one year."³³ When Vanport flooded in May 1948 and evacuees were moved into vacant units and trailers in Guild's Lake Courts, those in power feared that the temporary homes of Guild's Lake Courts would become a slum.

Emanuel Lee Breckel's family moved to Guild's Lake Courts in 1946. The home felt temporary to Breckel when they moved in, perhaps because parts of Guild's Lake Courts had already been dismantled. About a year later the family moved to Vanport where they lost everything in the flood. He and his siblings did not return to Guild's Lake Courts. They were placed in foster care; the family was never reunited. Breckel had no desire to talk about the flood; he focused on the time when his family was together.



Figure 5-9. (photo) Edith Bunch's two children, Julie and Thomas, and a friend who is holding a Patsy doll near their home, c. 1946. Note the tall wooden power poles and vast amount of undeveloped space. Courtesy of Edith Bunch.

Nationally, divorce rates skyrocketed under wartime pressures on family life and heightened insecurity about the future. Women experiencing workforce development might also have gained enough independence to challenge their economic reliance on an abusive, absent, adulterous, or alcoholic spouse. In 1942 in the United States, 321,000 couples divorced; four years later the number of divorces had nearly doubled to 610,000 couples.³⁴

Edith Bunch, who had separated from her husband and had been living in Windsor, Idaho, moved into the public housing in 1945 with her two children, Julie, age seven, and Thomas, age four. She had returned to Portland after the war to be closer to family, especially her sister. Once she had rented a unit at Guild's Lake Courts, her sister moved in with her to share expenses. Bunch found a job at

Montgomery Ward taking catalog orders over the phone; she started at fifty-six cents an hour. For two years, Bunch rented a three-bedroom unit in a four-plex at Guild's Lake Courts. Bunch recalled:

Houses were very difficult to rent in 1945. When I moved back to Portland in 1945, I was so fortunate to find housing in Guild's Lake! And the rent was cheap, too, which helped me, you know, because I was a single mother and I had to go to work.... So I was used to a wood stove. I learned how to bake in one and everything. But it was hard; it was hard at that time, when you worked all day, to come home, start a wood stove and everything. It took more time than an electric stove.... I took my son to the nursery in the morning before I went to work. And then my daughter went to school by herself. Because, there were a lot of children going to it. And then after school was out, she would go over to the Fruit and Flower nursery again.... It was so hard to find anything to rent right then. And there was a rent ceiling in Portland, too.³⁵

Janice Ball was the age of Edith Bunch's youngest child. Janice was born in 1939 and was very young when she lived in the development in 1944. She attended kindergarten at St. Patrick's Catholic School:

Oh, well, I think my stepdad went into the army, and so Mother needed an inexpensive place to live and, some place where it'd be safe and, that seemed to fit the bill. She could afford it. And, it was a good place for playing, for kids, you know, and umm... people didn't have much money... [She had been living in Portland and] I was glad to move away from there [to Guild's Lake Courts] because the place in Laurelhurst had had rats in the basement.³⁶

At Vanport and Guild's Lake Courts the populations had a short period of rapid decline but then occupancy rates stabilized a few months after the conclusion of World War II because of an influx of war veterans. The lag was because initially HAP was not legally allowed to offer homes for rent except to one of a dwindling number of employers on the "defense" industry list. John Sweeney moved to Guild's Lake

Courts in 1946, and the family's size increased from four to six while they lived there. At Vanport HAP set aside a distinct district for returning veterans.³⁷ This experience reflects the creation of the baby-boom generation. Sweeney's father re-enlisted in 1948, so for extended periods of time his mother raised the children alone. The two-bedroom dwelling was on the 3700 block of NW Guam Street, part of a four-plex. He recalls a community that was in flux, with people moving all the time:

The war was a great mixer of people.... During the war I was living with my mom and aunt in a two-bedroom house, two-story house out in Southeast. And so, few openings come out there [Guild's Lake Courts] and so anyway, we got our own place out there, and then my little brother and little sister were born and lived out there.... There's a lot of things they said were temporary that are still standing. And mostly if they kept good roofs on them, they're still doing fine.... [There were other larger families with as many as five children living in the same size unit the community.] There were a lot of people living in the same sized place so I figured they must have been sleeping on the floor and everywhere else, but the deal was they were together and they were a happy family and they got things put together and headed out and, uh, other people moved in.³⁸

Although veterans were being placed in HAP housing developments, it seems that most of these returning veterans were white. Interestingly, many were placed in Vanport because of the proximity of an Oregon University system extension campus there and the G.I. Bill's promise of higher education for returning troops. Just as families had done at the electric units it seems that at the Veteran's Village in Vanport, residents were claiming their suburban enclave in the sea of public housing:

In December 1945 HAP redesignated a cluster of Vanport units as "Veteran's Village." Villagers—who were mostly young white families—immediately distinguished themselves from the old-timer "transient element" by displaying all the trappings of permanent suburban homes. They painted and landscaped their units, put up small picket fences, and

organized to demand improved community facilities, better schools and a new recreation center from HAP.³⁹

After the Vanport Flood, 1948: Evacuees Arrive

There were certainly not enough vacant units to accommodate Vanport refugees in the remaining HAP housing portfolio. Just how many units were available is unknown, since HAP had already determined not to release vacancy rates in 1945. At Guild's Lake Courts the lucky refugees moved into available units but many moved into trailers. According to historian E. Kimbark MacColl:

Notwithstanding the fact that 5,294 units of Vanport housing were destroyed, dislodging and stranding nearly 17,000 people, the housing authority and the chamber of commerce pushed stubbornly ahead to liquidate the remaining Guild's Lake units in favor of industrial development. The units could have been spared for at least a few more years...but the private interests that controlled Guild's Lake real estate were too entrenched, insensitive, and greedy.⁴⁰

One former resident of Guild's Lake Courts, Vince Richard, recalled: "You were lucky you were living in Guild's Lake. Very, very lucky, fortunate. Lucky to be living in Guild's Lake and not Vanport."⁴¹

James C. Crolley was one of the luckier unlucky ones, who moved to into row housing at Guild's Lake Courts after the Vanport flood:

And we moved to Vanport. My sister had moved out here already and so she sent for my mother and I to come out and I thought we were just coming for a visit, but we just stayed.... [In Vanport] we lived in [a unit near the] old field where the cows were, so when the flood came we walked right on up the hill to watch it all. They got us a temporary unit over in Portland and we stayed with these people until they found us a unit at Guild's Lake.

So we moved to Guild's Lake. My sister, my brother, they had a son and another sister and her husband and I lived on Guam Street [NW Guam

Court] right off of St. Helens Road where that big drum factory was. Where they had the big drums inside there. We lived there and then they moved us to St. John's Woods.... We went to St. John's Woods. I went into the service. When I came out they had moved us over to Portland to a house where the Coliseum is now.... And I met my wife in Guild's Lake. She died in 2006. We were married for 52 years.... I remember so well Guild's Lake.⁴²

According John Sweeney, who lived at Guild's Lake Courts from 1946 to 1950, after the flood in 1948 the housing finally started to integrate. People were given any vacant unit that was available.⁴³ The *Oregon Journal* fanned blatantly false rumors that the housing at Guild's Lake Courts was being demolished to make room for trailers by printing an image of a row house being deconstructed shortly after the flood.⁴⁴ Options after the flood were so limited in Portland that some families moved to Vancouver. Historian Melissa Williams interviewed five residents of Vancouver, Washington, for her study, *Those Who Desire Very Much to Stay: African Americans and Housing in Vancouver, Washington, 1940–1960*. One Vancouver resident and Vanport Flood survivor Jean Griffin had this to say about the trailers at Guild's Lake Courts:

After the flood we moved over on Larrabee [Street], that was close to the where the Rose Garden [Arena] is now and they wanted to put up the Memorial Coliseum so they bought out all those houses around there. Of course that house was just temporary anyway, we were there because we didn't have any place else to go. The City decided they wanted to put the people from Vanport into trailers; they had trailers located way out somewhere, probably in St. Johns. We decided we didn't want to live in a trailer so that's when we decided to move [to Vancouver] and I'm glad we did.⁴⁵



Figure 5-10. (photo cropped) Aerial photo of 400 trailers taken by Herb Alden from the *Journal* helicopter. The trailers being assembled off of flatbeds on the railroad spear at Guild's Lake Courts for use by Vanport Flood evacuees in June 1948. The federal government transferred these surplus trailers, which had been used for defense housing in other parts of the country and were hastily salvaged to meet the critical need. Courtesy of the Oregon Historical Society (Neg # CN006082).



Figure 5-11. (photo) July 1, 1948, aerial image of trailers in position, shot by Huge Acroyd for Hal Lidell the rental director of Vanport. Photo also shows a number of the electric units at the top image is oriented south. The large building is on the site where once stood the 35th Ave. Community Building; pictured is the newly built Willard Battery building. The remaining row houses in between the electric units and the trailers had become veteran housing. Courtesy of Tom Robinson #809.

James C. Crolley came to Portland in 1945, three days after the Japanese surrendered, initially moving to Vanport. Like many African Americans, once in Portland, he was shifted between public housing complexes as well as being relocated by urban renewal. He likely lived at Guild's Lake Courts from 1948 to 1950. Perhaps because James met his wife at Guild's Lake Courts, he had more attachment to the community and attended the Guild's Lake Courts reunion held at McMenemy's Tavern and Pool in Portland on September 2007.



Figure 5-12. (photo cropped) Four African Americans children looking curiously out of window of their evacuee trailer at Guild's Lake Courts, c. June 1948. Photographer Les Ordeman, staff photographer the *Oregon Journal*. Courtesy of Norman Gholston.

Many Vanport evacuees at Guild's Lake Courts were in shock at having lost material possessions and social capital in their communities. The Guild's Lake District industrial area no longer had the plethora of job opportunities, because despite the

expanding manufacturing and industrialization, the loss of around-the-clock activity at the factories resulted in a net loss of jobs. As the jobs disappeared so did the federal funding that enabled families to have two wage earners, nursery schools and community centers were being dismantled along with the dwelling units (this process is covered in detail in chapter nine). Homeless African Americans and white Southerners (discernable by their accents) displaced by the flood were discriminated against when they tried to relocate into private market housing. As the 225 of the 400 trailers at Guild's Lake Courts and the 85 trailers at Swan Island closed and were sold as war surplus, African American resettlement patterns resulted in segregation and crowding in the Albina district in North Portland.⁴⁶ The lack of jobs might appear counter-intuitive because of the vast industrial expansion at that time, but that expansion was of warehouses, not production facilities.

Conclusion

Families who moved into Guild's Lake Courts in its first era were gainfully employed. Despite the fact that many families moved out after the war, enough families stayed to keep the community stable in the post war years. Children certainly adapted to moving into defense housing projects but teenagers rebelled by running away, as came to light in two instances. No interviewees came forward who had disliked living at Guild's Lake Courts, and the runaways were no exception. Teenagers were not the only ones to find it difficult adjusting to life in a community that supported twenty-four-hour industrial production. At the reunion in 2008 Arnold

Leppert's older sister Marjorie expressed that it was a lot more fun for her younger brother to live there than for herself as a newlywed.

The reunion's advertisements attracted a broader spectrum of individuals, than did the advertisements for individual interviews. Residents who had mixed memories about the development and African Americans were more comfortable with the reunion format. Parents moving into the development had concerns about enrolling their children in a good school and obtaining childcare for their younger children. The lack of privacy in the new housing development also took some adjustment for young children, but they relished the close proximity of playmates. After the shock of moving into a row house with paper-thin walls and an icebox subsided, families often wrote home and advised relatives to make the journey to Portland because the city offered fantastic work opportunities. Residents in the community pulled together and created a sense of place by anchoring themselves to community institutions; it was these institutions that embodied community pride. After moving into housing the next adjustment for many (because they had their job before moving in) was learning the ropes at the grade school, community centers, and nursery schools—places where children bridged differences and strengthened the community's resolve to first win the war, secondly assist single mothers and returning veterans, and later to offer shelter and compassion to flood evacuees.

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- ¹ Thorton Lorenzo, interview. *First Guild's Lake Courts Reunion held at McMenamin's Tavern and Pool*, DVD (2007; Portland, OR).
- ² *Cornerstones of Community: Buildings of Portland's African American History* (Portland, OR: Bosco-Milligan Foundation, 1997), 63.
- ³ "Reactivating 236 Units Proposed," *The Oregonian*. (5 January 1947): 20. Scrapbook of newspaper clippings, HAP Files, City of Portland Archives.
- ⁴ I speculate that references by African Americans at reunions to other housing projects, such as the Willbridge and Wake Place, were in fact communities within Guild's Lake Courts. The African American sections were also referenced by whites as the Kittredge or Buna-Gona section. Since the Guild's Lake grade school was adjacent to the African American section, there was mingling that might not have occurred had this segregated area been isolated.
- ⁵ Manly Maben, *Vanport* (Portland, OR: Oregon Historical Society Press, 1987), 104.
- ⁶ Richard Sanders, *Glimpses from the Past: 50 Years of Community Building* (Portland, OR: Housing Authority of Portland Press, 1991), 35.
- ⁷ E. Kimbark MacColl, *The Growth of a City: Power Politics in Portland, Oregon, 1915-1950* (Portland, OR: Georgian Press, 1979), 599.
- ⁸ John Sweeney, interview by Tanya March, November 2, 2007, audio recording, Portland, OR.
- ⁹ William F. Willingham, *Water Power in the Wilderness: The History of Bonneville Lock and Dam* (Portland: US Army Corps of Engineers, 1997), 1.
- ¹⁰ Historian Heather Fryer discussed in her section on Vanport that Mayor Riley bused the Gypsy population of Portland to San Antonio, which so agitated the Texas mayor that he placed a bounty on Riley's hide. Referenced in Portland Dept. of Public Safety, Ordinance 22-412, "War Code of the City of Portland, Oregon (Portland: WPA Project 165-1-94-33)," *Oregon Journal* (6 January 1945); *Oregonian* (8 January 1945).
- ¹¹ Heather Fryer, "Enclosed Worlds in Open Space: Federal Communities and Social Experience in the American West," unpublished dissertation, Boston College (Dec. 2002), 146.
- ¹² Gene W. Rossman, *History of the Housing Authority of Portland, OR, 1941-1973* (Portland, OR: Oregon Historical Society [MSS 1431], c. 1973), 33, Exhibit IV, 51.
- ¹³ Sanders, *Glimpses from the Past*, 59.
- ¹⁴ Wallace Turner, "105,000 Now Occupy City's Vast Projects," *The Oregonian* (Dec. 31, 1944): 14. Scrapbook of newspaper clippings, HAP Files, City of Portland Archives.
- ¹⁵ Arnold Leppert, interview by Tanya March, April 24, 2007., audio recording, Portland, OR.
- ¹⁶ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁷ Irene C. Squires, scrapbook, private collection, 1942-1944. Contains ration books, photos, handbook and, official letters.
- ¹⁸ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁹ Portland Public Schools, *Handbook for New Employees of Willamette Iron and Steel Corporation* (Portland: Division of Vocational Education in cooperation with the State Board for Vocational Education, 1942), 25. In Irene C. Squires, scrapbook, private collection. Contains ration books, photos, handbook and, official letters.
- ²⁰ William M. Tuttle Jr., *"Daddy's Gone to War": The Second World War in the Lives of America's Children* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 90.
- ²¹ Dale Butler, pre-interview for the interview by Tanya March, March 24, 2007, audio recording, Portland, OR.
- ²² Donald Lauinger, interview by Tanya March, September 8, 2006, audio recording, Portland, OR.
- ²³ Bob Hilger, interview by Tanya March, August 28, 2006, audio recording, Portland, OR.

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- ²⁴ Only African American individuals made references to their parents signing these promissory notes. No hardcopy record was preserved by those interviewed. The policy to exclude migrants from permanently relocating to Portland after the war is a critical feature of the African American Portland exclusion narrative.
- ²⁵ Ronald Pedersen, interview by Tanya March, September 12, 2006, audio recording, Vancouver, WA.
- ²⁶ William Hillgaertner, interview by Tanya March, April 9, 2007, audio recording, Portland, OR.
- ²⁷ Sanders, *Glimpses from the Past*, 21.
- ²⁸ Stuart McElderry, "Vanport Conspiracy Rumors and Social Relations in Portland, 1940–1950," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 99, no. 2 (Summer 1998): 158.
- ²⁹ Rudy Pearson, "African Americans in Portland, Oregon, 1940–1950: Living and Working Conditions—A Social History," unpublished dissertation, Washington State University (May 1996), 136.
- ³⁰ *Ibid.*, 133.
- ³¹ MacColl, *The Growth of a City*, 598.
- ³² *Ibid.*, 598.
- ³³ "City Council Approves Plan for 8,000 Defense Homes," *The Oregonian*, March 19, 1942, p. 1. Scrapbook of newspaper clippings, HAP Files, City of Portland Archives.
- ³⁴ Tuttle, "Daddy's Gone to War", 89, 90.
- ³⁵ Edith Bunch, interview by Tanya March, August 15, 2007, audio recording, Portland, OR. Edits returned October 2007.
- ³⁶ Janice Ball, interview by Tanya March, March 22, 2007, audio recording, Newburg, OR.
- ³⁷ Fryer, "Enclosed Worlds in Open Space," 178.
- ³⁸ John Sweeny, interview by Tanya March, November 2, 2007, audio recording, Portland, OR.
- ³⁹ Fryer, "Enclosed Worlds in Open Space," 178.
- ⁴⁰ MacColl, *The Growth of a City*, 601.
- ⁴¹ Vince Richard, interview. *First Guild's Lake Courts Reunion held at McMenamins Tavern and Pool*, DVD (2007; Portland, OR).
- ⁴² Anonymous, interview. *First Guild's Lake Courts Reunion held at McMenamins Tavern and Pool*, DVD (2007; Portland, OR).
- ⁴³ John Sweeny, interview by Tanya March, November 2, 2007, audio recording, Portland, OR.
- ⁴⁴ Negative Number 67183, Oregon Historical Society. From June 8, 1948, *Oregon Journal* text: "Coming Down to make room for industrial expansion are much-needed Guild's Lake homes on Texas Company Property formerly leased by the Portland housing authority. Few streets away the federal agency rushed emergency dwellings into the area to make homes for evacuees of flood area."
- ⁴⁵ Jean Griffin, interview by Christal Jenkins and Melissa Williams, the Center for Columbia River History's Vancouver African American History Project, audio recording transcribed by Melissa Williams, April 30, 2001.
- ⁴⁶ Pearson, "African Americans in Portland, Oregon, 1940–1950," 219.

CHAPTER 6:
COMMUNITY SERVICE INSTITUTIONS FOR RESIDENTS OF
GUILD'S LAKE COURTS

Introduction

The evolution of community service institutions at Guild's Lake Courts was typical of defense housing developments up until the events of 1948. The transition from defense housing to affordable housing caused the historical narrative to deviate from other defense housing developments when services adapted to serve Vanport Flood evacuees. During the war years, institutions within Guild's Lake Courts played a critical role in pacifying tensions between whites and African Americans and encouraging cooperation against a common enemy. After the war, prejudice became an undercurrent in the city and African Americans were cut off from housing and employment opportunities. This lack of mobility became acute after the Vanport Flood when an evacuee community was installed in the heart of Guild's Lake Courts, hastening the termination of all the housing units. Institutions at Guild's Lake Courts characterized all three stages of the site's evolution from (1) strictly a wartime operation with housing limited to defense workers to (2) affordable postwar housing to (3) relief housing after the Vanport Flood of May 1948.

When residents signed their leases at the Housing Authority Office on NW 35th Avenue, they were notified that any members of their household between the ages of six and sixteen were required by state law to attend school unless they had completed the eighth grade. For many students, enrolling in Portland Public Schools (PPS) was the first time they were in a formal school setting where students were

taught exclusively with their individual grade level.¹ During the war years the federal government constructed and funded many of the community service programs with the intent of serving children (see Table 6-1 for a list of childhood education available to residents). After the war, local Portland philanthropic institutions organically reactivated to fill the void left behind as the federal government withdrew from the day-to-day operation of public housing developments.

Five community centers operated at Guild's Lake Courts. Nursery care was provided at each, and three of the centers provided grade school classrooms for young children. For the first two school years that Guild's Lake Courts was occupied, Chapman School at 1445 NW 26th Avenue served as the main grade school. A dedicated grade school building, for second through eighth grade students living at Guild's Lake Courts, was constructed following the interim use of Chapman. Some parents enrolled their children in St. Patrick's parochial grade school. Many high school students shunned Lincoln High, the neighborhood school, because youth from Guild's Lake Courts who entered Lincoln warned peers about their difficulties with the local students. These teenagers elected to attend Benson Technical, located across the Willamette River.

These educational and enrichment amenities had all been part of the programming of large public housing complexes as early as 1933, but unlike the facilities built during the Great Depression, these were classified as temporary. The schools, nurseries, and community recreation centers were conceived as barebones operations that would get no postwar financial support from the government.

However, the grade school and fire station were more labor-intensive to construct. Portlanders generally expected that some facilities, like these, would outlast the housing units and be preserved to serve the pre-existing residential community.

Because Guild's Lake Courts was not geographically isolated as was Vanport, the residents had access to a rich pre-existing infrastructure just outside of the development's boundaries. However, whites resided in housing units that gave them greater access to downtown Portland and were less dependent on community facilities than their African American counterparts, who were located further from downtown, north of NW Kittredge Ave. This is not unusual for the period: in Richmond, California, public housing units exclusively occupied by whites were intentionally placed as a buffer between the pre-existing white residential housing community and the area of public housing units designated for African Americans.²

Table 6-1. Childhood Education for Residents of Guild's Lake Courts

Type	Name	Location	Operator	Level	Time Period
Nursery School	Friendly House	off site	Presbyterian Church	preschool	1942–1950
	Guild's Lake Child Service Centers (5)*	on site	federal government	preschool	1942–1945
	Guild's Street Community Center	on site	Fruit and Flower	preschool	1945–1950
	Vanport Evacuee Center Guam Street Community Center	on site	Fruit and Flower	preschool	June 1948– February 1949
Grade School	Chapman School	off site	PPS	K–8	1942–Spring 1944 (afternoons only)
	St. Patrick's School	off site	Catholic Church	K–8	1942–1950
	Linnton School**	off site	PPS	K–8	1942–Spring 1944
	Guild's Lake Child Service Centers (5)*	on site	PPS	K–2	1942–1950
	Guild's Lake School	on site	PPS	2–8	Fall 1944–Fall 1951***
High School	Lincoln High	off site	PPS	9–12	1942–1950
	Benson Tech./Girls Poly	off site	PPS	9–12	1942–1950
	St. Mary's Academy	off site	Catholic Church	9–12	1942–1950

* These were located at Guild Street, 35th Avenue, Gona Street, Guam Street, and 29th Avenue.

** Linnton School served the northern most section of African American community for a period of time, after a student from Guild's Lake School was killed by a train. The school paper expressed it thus: "All children in the 3rd through 8th grade, who live in the Gona Street Section, from Guild's Lake School are going by bus to Linnton. This change was made because it was dangerous for children to cross the tracks to come to our school, and because of the crowded conditions in our school."³ Additionally, students from Guilds Lake School with advanced skills in musical instruments went to Linnton School on Wednesday mornings for orchestra practice.⁴ This extra musical education like the manual training at Chapman School for Guilds Lake School students operated continuously. The Linnton School, 10450 N.W. 2nd St. was built in 1929, was converted into eleven condominiums in 1992.

*** The school opened in the Fall of 1944 for 1,100 pupils in the Fall of 1951 there were only 150 pupils, fourteen of those pupils-- from the 7th and 8th grade classrooms in 1951-- had started as kindergarteners or first graders when the school first opened. The principle of the school from 1944-1948 was Mr. Posey, "Since 1948, Mr. Garber, Mr. Lind, and Miss. Riley have served as Principles of Guilds Lake School."⁵

Nursery Schools

National Context: The Need for Early Childcare in the War Effort

Working mothers soon became a controversial issue. Despite the need for women to work in the defense industry, many still felt that a mother's role was to remain in the home with her children. The Community Facilities Act, typically referred to as the Lanham Act, was passed in June 1941. Congress could expect that half of the women working would be mothers and a third of working mothers would have children between the ages of one and six.⁶ A landmark in the evolution of federal-state-city relationships,⁷ the Act was aimed at retaining female workers in war industries by authorizing the Federal Works Agency (FWA) to fund construction and operation of nursery schools, childcare centers, grade schools, and recreation facilities. The Act imposed centralized control, reversing the policy of giving cities (through their housing authorities) localized control of developments. Without these programs, Lanham Act supporters feared production during this time of war emergency would be crippled by high labor turnover.

The Act supported the construction and operation of nursery and grade schools in conjunction with the fabric of defense housing communities. Nursery schools typically offered Tiny Tot programs for ages two to four and kindergarten programs for toilet-trained children ages three to six. Programs were created practically overnight to provide care and education for children, healthcare for workers and their children, and takeaway prepared meals and recreation centers for the entire family. If a child were ill, the mother would still leave her child in the nursery school where he or

she would be watched by a trained nurse away from uninfected children. Historian William M. Tuttle reported that women across the country did not initially embrace the nursery school programs provided at the Lanham Act community centers because they were a novelty. Most nursery schools built in Portland region using Lanham funds were carbon copies of each other, hence the difficulty in ascertaining which of the five nurseries at Guild's Lake Courts was photographed in 1944 in Figure 6-1. This center is also indistinguishable from the centers at University Homes and Vanport.

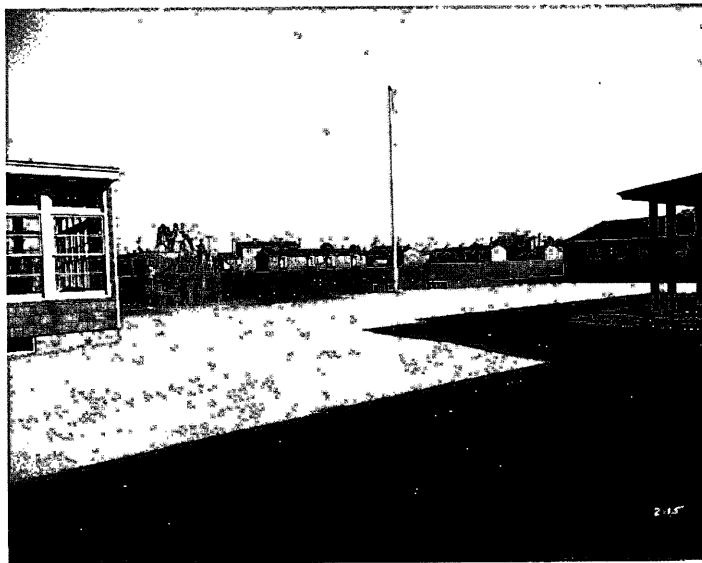


Figure 6-1. (photo) One of the Guild's Lake Courts nursery schools, c. 1944. Morris Whitehouse designed this structure on the left with the casement windows in the 35th Avenue Community Center between Yeon and Guam. Courtesy of the City of Portland Archives, A2001-025.221

Families from all levels of society moved into defense centers. For many of these families this was their first experience with urban life. With gasoline rationed, nursery care needed to be situated in close proximity either to the family's residence

or parent's place of employment. Until 1943, the official U.S. federal policy was to discourage the employment of mothers with young children. The Federal Works Administration (FWA) determined that childcare was a necessity even if the mother was not employed, because if husband worked the nightshift he would need any children to remain outside of the home in order to get rest during the day. The ultra-compact defense housing units lacked soundproofing, and often every room functioned as a sleeping area. So it became critical for the war effort that the needs of children be accommodated, particularly those of young children requiring adult supervision.

In the memoir of Chauncy Del French, who lived at Ogden Meadows, the paper-thin walls were akin to having all the drama of TV without a picture tube:

The walls were made of some sort of thin paperboard. Normal conversational tones could be heard two apartments away in either direction.... Then, about 6:30AM, the baby in the other apartment next to us started to cry. There was no other sound save the child's crying ... [so] we went to the rental manager with the problem. He had his officer's report, which stated that the baby next door to us was but five months old. Its parents had originally been swing shifters but had been transferred to graveyard. That explained a great deal—the baby was all alone from 12 to 9.⁸

The manager tried to place people together who worked the same shift; there was no concern for the baby who slept in a chest of drawers and the Del Frenchs were simply relocated to a new housing unit.

The migrant defense workers lacked the familial networks to assist in childcare, yet they often sought out more traditional one-on-one support with neighbors instead of using the nursery schools. In 1943 there were 1,951 federally

funded nursery centers in operation nationally. The nursery directors found it difficult to get parents to bring their children to nursery school and enrollment was only 30 percent of capacity.⁹ The nursery schools filled a paternalistic role similar to that once served in cities by the settlement houses of the reform era to integrate newcomers into the broader community and thus were shunned by many migrants.

The vast system of nursery centers nationally was short-lived. After the conclusion of the war with Japan, the federal government quickly started to disentangle itself from operating public housing and nurseries; Congress funded the nurseries until March 1, 1946, and the vast majority of defense housing was privatized. By 1958 only 2 percent of defense housing nationally had been retained and was operated by local housing authorities. Most nurseries were closed in 1946.¹⁰

Table 6-2. Wartime Nursery Schools in Portland, Oregon, as of July 3, 1943

Preschool Children	Operated by PPS	Capacity	Average Daily Attendance June 28–July 3, 1943
Blessed Martin Day Nursery	no	28	20
Victory Nursery School	no	40	21
Portland Fruit and Flower Mission Day Nursery	no	80	71
St. Helens Hall Nursery School	no	31	19
Volunteers of America Day Nursery	no	70	52
Fargo Nursery School	yes	20	20
Portsmouth Nursery School	yes	25	23
Girls Polytechnic School	yes	40	16
Lents Nursery School	yes	25	16
Vestal Nursery School	yes	25	15
Neighborhood House Nursery School	no	25	17
Guild's Lake Nursery School	yes	40	opening July 14, 1943
Friendly House Nursery School	no	40	opening August 1, 1943
Vanport Nursery Schools*	yes	960	not open yet
Kaiser Nursery Schools	no	pending	not open yet

* There were six onsite childcare in the planning documents for Vanport. Most researchers have focused on the two centers built by Kaiser that were offsite. Little is known about the operations of the six onsite centers.

Nursery school programs in Portland, like their national counterparts, experienced a challenge to hire and retain staff. In 1944, the board of directors of the Portland's Fruit and Flower¹¹ were distressed that the Community Chest¹² wanted all the nursery schools it assisted financially to have college-educated teachers and programs with offerings along the lines of the government-sponsored nurseries. The archives of Fruit and Flower are extensive and contain a hundred years of photographs, child-produced art, logbooks, accounting ledgers, and meeting notes.

The directors of many philanthropic nursery schools facilities met together in 1944 to discuss how many at the meeting faced daunting tasks of reorganization of its staff, outreach, and funding issues. Programs in all cities with defense centers were struggling with recruiting properly educated staff as enrollment boomed in the summer of 1944. By mid-May 1944, 87,406 children nationally were enrolled in 2,512 centers, peaking in July 1944 at 129,357 children.¹³ After a rough start, the nursery school programs were gaining students and increased acceptance.

Portland's Experience: Guild's Lake Courts Compared to Vanport

At their peak in late 1944, twenty-five nursery schools operated in Portland. Eight of the federally funded nurseries served Vanport residents; six of those were onsite. The majority of the city's nurseries were in housing projects, and eleven of those were operated by PPS (the six onsite at Vanport and the five onsite at Guild's Lake Courts). Tuition typically covered only a third of the operation costs; the federal government absorbed the rest of the cost of nursery school operations in defense centers. These Portland area nurseries,¹⁴ in February 1944, served a total of 841 children a day, far below their capacity reported eight months before (see Table 6-2).¹⁵ Yet despite the daily enrollment of nearly 2,000 (when including the 1,050 children participating at Kaiser's two nurseries), these establishments were perpetually underutilized. Unless one carefully studies site plans and maps, it would be easy to overlook the six nursery centers within the boundaries of Vanport "constructed from a stock plan furnished by a government agency in Washington."¹⁶ It appears that all the

five nurseries at Guild's Lake Courts (with the possible exception of the center at Guild's Street Nursery next to the teen center serving Wake Street) used this same stock plan. In the discourse about Vanport nursery schools, the focus and data in this section is primarily about the two innovative centers built by Kaiser at his shipyards—Oregon Shipbuilding Corporation and the Swan Island Shipyards.

At the peak of the war production, 25,000 women worked in Portland's shipyards. Historian Amy Kesselman, who focused on the experience of women shipyard workers in the region (the interviews she relied on were from former residents of Vanport), gives us an insight into why the nurseries in Vancouver and Portland were underutilized:

[P]arents were reluctant to leave children with people they didn't know, lacked confidence in the quality of care the centers provided, and feared the spread of contagious disease in large groups of children...and they feared their children would not get individual attention.¹⁷

There was also the fear of judgment: the trained nursing and teaching staff were all college-educated and might look down on an illiterate parent. The capacity for preschool-age students at the facilities at Guild's Lake Courts nurseries was limited because a number of classrooms were transferred to PPS and served as grade school classrooms for the duration. Despite this diminished nursery school capacity, the facilities at Guild's Lake Courts, based on anecdotal evidence and images (see Figure 6-2), provided care for more African American children than did Vanport's nursery centers.



Figure 6-2. (photo, cropped) Fruit and Flower Nursery School at Guild's Lake Courts March 2, 1950. Photographer James C. M— [the rest of his last name is illegible] captures the young children holding an integrated tea party on produce box. Courtesy of the Oregon Historical Society OrHI#91020.

Whatever uneasiness parents felt about child-care centers must have been magnified for black parents, who encountered racial discrimination in the community and the workplace. Only one center in Portland attracted substantial numbers of black children—The Blessed Martin Day Nursery. Located in the black community and run by the Society of St. Vincent De Paul, Blessed Martin was full or above its twenty-eight-child capacity throughout the war. Most child-care centers were run by white staff and inevitably reflected the racism of the community. The Kaiser Child Service centers were no exception. Of 450 parents whose children were enrolled at the two centers in 1943, only three were black, and the numbers [of black families] never increased much.¹⁸

The nursery centers at Guild's Lake Courts had two distinctions from the operations at Vanport that made them more inclusive: 1) the facility at Gona Street Child Service

Center was centrally located in the heart of the African American community and 2) at least one of the nursery employees was African American.

Images of children of color are rare in the Portland press when reporting on defense housing units. Possibly this was the result of a public relations plan by HAP to avoid depictions of African American children at the facilities in an effort to forestall any conversation about race and integration. Vanport's image as "The Negro Project" was a postwar dilemma for HAP. Once the need to stand unified against a common enemy ended with the conclusion of the war, racism reemerged in the public discourse in Portland, and public housing was attacked as a refuge for African Americans. During an interview by James Hymes, Lois Meek Stolz, then the onsite director of the Kaiser nursery centers at Vanport and Swan Island, reflected:

There was one group, however, with which we failed. We never did reach out to many black mothers—we had few black children. Looking back, the fault was in a large part ours. We had no black staff members. And we learned near the end that our buildings looked so grandiose to black mothers. At that time they couldn't quite believe the Centers were for their children too.¹⁹

The two nursery facilities operated by Kaiser were in a league of their own and even today they would be deluxe facilities. These worksite centers operated twenty-four hours a day exclusively for nursery school use. Kaiser had linked daily life with productivity for his visionary development at Vanport. He found the Lanham Act to be procedurally complicated and circumvented its regulation to build the unprecedented nursery facilities at Vanport, recouping their cost by increasing the cost of his ships:

Organized like the spokes of a wheel, fifteen playrooms surrounded an outdoor play area with a wading pool. Each playroom had a covered area

so children could play outside on Portland's numerous rainy days. The architects planned the entire building from a child's point of view, lowering the windows of the playrooms to fit a small child's sight-lines, designing child-sized furniture for each age group, and even redesigning bathroom fixtures to meet the needs of young children.... To build the centers, Kaiser expeditors, cajoling suppliers across the country, requisitioning hard-to-find materials and ordered custom-made goods, accomplishing a wartime miracle.²⁰

Danielle Hopkins, an amateur historian and an employee of Fruit and Flower in the 1970s, describes the Kaiser programs as superior, and their eventual loss put great strain on private nurseries.²¹

Parents hired by the defense industry needed to work continuously without concern for how to manage their school-age children's activities during the summer months. This need did not end with the war; nursery center staff took up the slack in the summertime. The nursery school at Guild's Lake Courts in the summer of 1947 appropriated a vacant housing unit to care for a dozen school-age children. Their teacher "was a real substitute mother and I'm sure turned them the right way and away from future juvenile delinquency."²² Industrialists were concerned that their workers' children be supervised for the length of the factory shifts and pressured schools to provide extended days of operation during the school year and in the summer. The hours of care offered to defense workers for their minor children at first were incongruous with laborers' needs through the region. The six nursery schools at Vanport initially closed at 6:00PM. Because Kaiser's shipyards shift ended at 6:30PM, Kaiser felt compelled to built two massive centers to have care match up with workers' schedules.

The minimalist nurseries at Guild's Lake Courts were not the imposing brick façades designed by the architectural firm Wolff & Phillips; the octagonal building they retained was still read as imposing cutting-edge facility innovation. The playground equipment was also minimalist by design (see figures 6-2 and 7-4). In Figure 6-2 the children from the postwar period use an old produce box as a table. The image of children playing (see Figure 7-4) shows three tricycles, a balance beam of sorts, and a short wooden set of monkey bars still used by Fruit and Flower in 2007.

Wartime 1942–1944: Five Nursery Schools Opened at Guild's Lake Courts

In Guild's Lake Courts, the confluence of residents from various socioeconomic and racial backgrounds was just as critical to the weaving together of the community as the adaptation of rural families to city life. In 1942 job absenteeism and job abandonment in the Portland area were rampant among female laborers because there were not enough nursery and after-school programs.

Five buildings were designed and built to accommodate nursery school activities: Guild Street, 35th Avenue, Gona Street, Guam Street, and 29th Avenue. Each of the five community centers offered some sort of nursery school programming, although nursery program space was later absorbed in part for grade school use. Federal money was used for both programs. The nursery and lower grade option managed by PPS was available to young residents out of diapers, covering children 3–8 years of age (grades K–2) alongside the Portland Parks and Recreation nursery and enrichment programs.

In the war years the daycare facility for children ages 4½ to 5 was located behind the rental office, within the 35th Street Community Center. Referred to as the Guild's Lake Nursery School, it opened on July 14, 1943. The cost was fifty cents a day and opened six days a week; the government willing to subsidize the centers to retain female defense workers. The Guam Street Community Center offered half-day kindergarten for children ages 3–6, as well as a Tiny Tots group. The 29th Avenue Community Building also had a half-day kindergarten program and preschool tap dancing.²³

Janice Bell recalled that after her parents divorced, she was placed at the Fruit and Flower Nursery. She said, "You had to be potty-trained, and I was just barely potty-trained, and they took me." Gloria Cash's memories of nursery school are amplified by photographs her family had taken of her as a toddler playing with childhood friends.²⁴ Some individuals interviewed recalled dropping off or picking up siblings at nursery school. Bob Hilger's mother worked at one of the childcare centers. He has an image of his mother with other staff members enjoying themselves after work at an unidentified childcare center.

Postwar 1945–1948: Decline of Nursery Schools: Fruit and Flower Takes Over

Edith Bunch moved to the development as a single mother after the war and enrolled her son Thomas in the Fruit and Flower nursery program at Guild's Lake Courts; her daughter Jeanne attended the Guild's Lake School, and in the summers she joined her brother at Fruit and Flower. For many single parents, nursery school was a critical need even after the war.

The federal government, beginning in 1945, started to disengage from funding nursery and grade schools. Miss Elizabeth Goddard was concerned by how the loss of 60 percent of the funding would affect local nursery schools and to assess which school should remain operating. Goddard surveyed families at eleven Lanham Act nurseries in the Portland metro region and classified the situation of the parents as acute need, moderate need, or no need. Fruit and Flower and Volunteers of America were to take on two pre-war centers, a branch of the projects, while Vanport and University Homes would remain independently operated; this option to maintain these limited facilities operated for only those families at Guild's Lake Courts in acute need.²⁵ In the October 11, 1945, meeting of the Fruit and Flower board, it became apparent that instead of reorganizing the institution into a more governmental style of service, it would be taking over additional operations. "The Lanham Act Fund nursery schools, or the majority of them, are to close soon. We may be asked to absorb some of these children into our nursery until the emergency is over."²⁶ The organization that had been struggling to feed and clothe children during rationing was about to expand its programs with little warning or planning.

Fruit and Flower was a philanthropic organization that received funds from donors, the Community Chest, tuition fees, and an endowment fund. The Community Chest and tuition were the main sources of funds for nursery care. The board of directors was not involved in the operations at Guild's Lake Courts, which was run as a satellite program, and it appears that they made only one site visit.

According to meeting minutes from October 9, 1947, attendance at the Guild's Lake Courts center was down to thirty-five children, and to facilitate operations by bringing attendance up to full capacity, the policy to serve only families in acute financial need was expanded to include families of moderate means. Attendance went up at the Fruit and Flower program at Guild's Lake Courts because of this policy change: "There were eight new children; only one [of the eight new pupils] lives on the project. This seems to indicate that there is a need for a better location [for the Guild's Lake Courts operation]."²⁷

The Federal Housing Authority paid for improvements to the building that included painting the exterior, repairing the linoleum floors, and replacing sinks²⁸; it appears that interested parties expected the Guild's Lake Courts branch to remain open indefinitely.

The fact that Fruit and Flower kept one of the daycare centers open is a testament to the board's willingness and desire to assist the working mother. In February 1946 the federal government funding ended and 2800 nursery schools closed leaving 1.5 million children without care.²⁹

In order to meet the increasing demand by parents of preschoolers, the programs for school-age children at the main site were transferred to Shattuck School. Staffing shortages were universal during the war period, stabilizing only at the conclusion of the war. After the war, the center was able to comply with the directive of the Community Chest that all head teachers must be college graduates from schools accredited in nursery education, a condition of employment that was also now required by city code.³⁰ Ms. Martin was retained after the war to direct the nursery center when

operations were transferred to Fruit and Flower. However, the non-profit group was unable to purchase the building and, while keeping the doors open, made efforts to relocate the center. In 1945 children ages 2 to 4½ were supervised by Betty Peterson at NW 29th Avenue and Guild Street.

When Fruit and Flower assumed control of the center there were forty-three employees on the payroll at the two locations, and the salaries paid totaled \$13,399 (\$2,000 more than the fees paid by the parents). Other expenses that year included costs for the installation of eight new toilets and the purchase of children's clothes.³¹

Post Vanport Flood, 1948: Nursery School Services for the Evacuees

Guild's Lake Courts absorbed hundreds of families after the flood. The least fortunate flood victims, selected because of their small household size, were rented trailers. An unknown number of families moved into vacant units available in June 1948. According to a May 1948 meeting of the Fruit and Flower Board, the daycare facility at Guild's Lake Courts was at capacity and not enough equipment was available to adequately care for more children at that remote location; it opened its doors to six young Vanport evacuees at its main center on SW Market and 12th. The desire to assist additional young evacuees expanded the activities of the not-for-profit Fruit and Flower organization to a second remote site, this time expanding into the Community Center on 35th Street. (If you looked at the original map, the 29th Street Child Service Center would have been better situated for serving the trailers but had already been demolished and replaced by another building with a similar footprint.)

Before to the flood, Fruit and Flower was attempting to obtain a new building to establish a permanent presence in Northwest. The efforts to obtain a permanent second site closer to Chapman School became impractical after the flood, with staff and volunteers spread thin. The volunteer board responded to the plight of flood victim families by shifting gears to support the evacuated children arriving at Guild's Lake Courts without toys or other material possessions. On average, Vanport's six onsite nursery centers had been serving 175 children (150 on any given day). After the flood, 1,000 children of working parents needed some level of assistance; finding places for the younger children became a priority for nursery schools citywide. Even nursery-age children who had never enrolled in nursery school while living in Vanport needed assistance to overcome the trauma of losing their home. The professional staff of Fruit and Flower worked with community mothers to create a program that allowed parent participation and enabled children to start the healing process with their families.

The temporary nursery-school program at Guild's Lake Courts lasted for six months, although twenty families remained in trailers for over a year. The program was not limited to nursery-school-age children since it was implemented during the summer of 1948 when children were not enrolled in school. Onsite workers provided care, art activities, and free play for sixty children in two three-hour programs—one in the morning and one in the afternoon. Mothers were encouraged to participate in the daily activities as volunteers with the children. These mothers needed community support after losing everything in the flood. Children (as in Figure 6-3) helped out

with daily tasks in the trailers where life was very cramped. The rental trailers only had cold running water. The programs tailored to these evacuees must have been the highlight of the day for children like these three little girls, who do not even make eye contact with the photographer. It is possible that this sink with running water is not even in their trailer but at the expanded trailer with the restrooms.



Figure 6-3. (photo) Three young girls living in the trailers are washing. The first trailers to arrive in 1948 were only suited for families of four, but many families were larger. Photographer Les Ordeman, staff photographer the *Oregon Journal*. Courtesy of Norman Gholston.

Children of flood victims were given preference on the Fruit and Flower waitlist. The Chapman School principal's request for an aftercare program, which he felt would aid in preventing delinquency, was no longer a consideration as federal funding evaporated. Also terminated by PPS was its vacation-care program, the most

popular of which was at Chapman School. Until May 31, 1949, Fruit and Flower ran two programs at Guild's Lake Courts, the traditional one and a short-hour program for mothers and children at the trailer park. According to Mrs. Keenan:

The new nursery at Guild's Lake started out most satisfactorily. Twenty-six children reported for the morning session and twenty-two for afternoon. Some of these children, average age three, were left home alone while their mothers were at work. Every child is inspected each morning before he is admitted. The parents are coming to observe the work being done for the children, some are assisting with the transportation. They are very much interested and it is expected that they will be an important part of the planned program. The mothers are interested in group meetings with the teachers.... The main nursery [averaged] fifty.³²

The short-hour day nursery was started when as many as ten people, seven children and three adults, were living in one of the 8'x16' trailers at Guild's Lake Courts after the flood. The children had lost their toys in the flood, and their trailer project had no provision for playgrounds, so the nursery, a Community Chest agency, operated its program in the Guild's Lake community building. The aim of the nursery was to give children a place to play, and to give mothers instruction on problems of childcare. Many of the toys and much of the equipment was donated, while tables and chairs were borrowed from the preexisting Guild's Lake day nursery.

Basically, the government began directing women to leave their jobs and return home to care for children. Four factors culminated in the unexpected closure of the Fruit and Flower nurseries at Guild's Lake Courts—the same factors that accelerated demolition of the housing units: 1) fear of a large, entrenched African American population “blighting” the city; 2) a desire for industrial warehouse

expansion in the area; 3) a reduction in federal funds; and 4) resolution of court cases regarding housing demolition. Seven months after sprucing up the facility, the Guild's Lake Courts' two remaining nurseries were losing their families.

The center for the evacuees was closed first; *The Oregonian* ran a story about the final days of this program on May 27, 1949. On July 13, 1950, as there were decreasing numbers of occupied temporary units at the development, Fruit and Flower planned to close its longest running operation in Guild's Lake Courts on October 31, 1950, and transfer the staff to its single remaining operation in Southwest Portland. Society, apparently, anticipated that most women would leave the labor market and those who retained their jobs would be able to rely on family members or friends for daycare needs. Fruit and Flower Board Chairman Frieda Ettelson delivered the somber news at the organization's 1950 annual meeting in that in light of the dearth of good daycare, "it was a tragedy to disband an organization that was already established."³³ Even though those in the field of childcare recognized that a need still existed, they had been unable to finance the relocation. The nursery at Guild's Lake Courts was disbanded.

Grade Schools, K-8

Schools Expand in Wartime, 1942-1944

The 1942 school year challenged PPS with 10,000 new school-age students enrolling in Portland's public schools.³⁴ The rapid influx of students was negatively affecting student-teacher ratios and could not be sustained by the existing staff and

structures. In 1942, there were 1,300 teachers assigned to classrooms in the Portland Public School system-wide, with 200 in reserve to be assigned to areas of need and as substitutes.³⁵ The extreme strain of the influx of new students on the school system took its toll. Wesley C. Brown, superintendent of schools in Clark County, Washington, chided the policymakers in the Vancouver-Portland region for failing to address the needs of school systems anticipating 12,300 new students in the fall of 1942 and a total of 30,000 new students by the end of the 1942–1943 school year.³⁶

Despite efforts in 1943 to retain trained professionals, 550 teachers in the county had no college degree, and the rapid hiring of 180 new teachers did little to raise standards.³⁷ A year later, not only was classroom size and double-shifting an issue, but PPS was still in dire need of an infusion of teachers—a problem made especially difficult because the salaries offered to teachers could not compete with the region’s lucrative defense industry jobs. According to *The Oregonian*, on December 12, 1943, the schools within Multnomah County were to be supplemented by the FWA with \$495,000 of emergency funds to allow a “raise in wages for all present teachers and enable the district to hire 300” additional teaching staff to support the new students.³⁸

The inability of the existing neighborhood grade school, Chapman, to meet the needs of children was the impetus for the construction of the Guild’s Lake School. While some families opted to send their children to St. Patrick’s School, most children attended public schools. Guild’s Lake School was open to students for long hours, six days a week, to support parents employed in defense jobs.

Chapman Grade School: Balancing the Needs of a Newly Expanded Community

When defense workers first arrived in Portland en masse, the local schools adapted to accommodate the influx of the student-age family members. Local schools that opened their doors to children from Guild's Lake Courts included Chapman, St. Patrick's,³⁹ Linnton Grade School, Benson Polytechnic High School, Girl's Poly, and Lincoln High School. At the same time that Chapman grade school was operating in double shifts, Guild's Lake Courts children ages six to eight years old were being instructed at three onsite nursery schools.⁴⁰ The grade school at Chapman (and later the newly constructed school at Guild's Lake Courts) was superior in the quality of education to that experienced previously by many of the children who had migrated with their families to Portland. This was the first time that public education was sponsored by federal funding in Portland.

The school board combined District 1 and 33 into one district and voted to keep twenty school buildings, including Chapman Grade School, open for the summer of 1943; the federal government provided \$50,000 "to give boys and girls something to do while their mothers were employed in war industries."⁴¹

Double-shifting was a policy to accommodate new students in existing schools, a policy that in practice separated local and migrant children chronologically. When PPS opened for the 1943–1944 school year, 3,134 new students registered citywide.⁴² In order to accommodate this influx, several of Portland's public schools operated on two shifts: Sitton, George, Portsmouth, Peninsula, and Chapman. Five

hundred children of the new residents of Guild's Lake Courts in the fall of 1943 registered at Chapman Grade School, while others enrolled in Linnton Grade School. African Americans migrants, perhaps engrained to avoid white public schools in the South, for the most part selected not to enroll their children in PPS (the neighborhood schools were Chapman Grade School and Lincoln High). These un-enrolled children were being kept at home. Portland's schools had been officially integrated in 1873, when the "Colored School", which PPS had opened in 1867, was closed and thirty African American children attending the school were integrated into neighborhood schools.⁴³

Parents became increasingly concerned about safety issues, as the short daylight hours of winter approached with children walking home in the dark, and some families stopped sending their children to school. So the staggering enrollment figures at the grade schools in 1943 actually understates the school-age student population residing in the defense housing because of increasing truancy.

HAP projected that once Guild's Lake Courts was complete and fully occupied, there would be 2,000 new grade school pupils in District 1.⁴⁴ The Guild's Lake Courts students were from all regions of the United States; all were placed in the afternoon shift from 12:15PM to 5:15PM.⁴⁵ Joe Kordic's family lived near Guild's Lake Courts at NW 32nd Avenue and Wilson and, in the 1943–1944 school year, he was in the morning shift at Chapman from 8:00AM to noon with the other longtime neighborhood children. His life was changed by the presence of all of the new families in his community. Even after Guilds Lake School was opened, older boys in grades

seven and eight returned to Chapman for manual training classes. The girls in the seventh and eighth grades also headed over to Chapman weekly for a home economics course.

Grade Schools in Community Centers

The vexing problem for educators in Portland was the number of children not enrolled in school despite compulsory attendance requirements in Oregon for children between the ages of six and sixteen. Why was a large population of school-age children from the defense housing not enrolled in school, and what could be done to promote their education? The problem of race relations was often ignored. Officially, the truancy at Guild's Lake Courts was attributed to the timing of the second shift of grade school for Guild's Lake Courts students, but the unspoken problem was that Chapman was perceived to be a school for whites.

To deal with these two aforementioned pressing issues, acting Superintendent J. W. Edwards transferred seven teachers from Chapman Grade School to temporary sites at Guild's Lake Courts. Even after a grade school was opened at Guild's Lake Courts in 1944, these satellite programs offering grade schools for younger students remained in operation alongside the nursery programs in the child service centers for the duration; the last center in operation was at Gona Street.⁴⁶ “[Edwards] explained that these 100 youngsters, living in the far areas of Guild's Lake Courts, would have had to cross two railroad tracks and one arterial highway to reach a bus line to take them to school.”⁴⁷ These “100 youngsters” were African American; Edwards had been

unable to obtain traffic police to supervise children crossing arterial highways. Desegregating would have required additional busing to schools other than Chapman, which was already filled beyond capacity. Running classrooms in the community centers was conflicting with the need for expanded nursery care at the centers (federal age restrictions were being lifted to allow children as young as two years old to enroll). The only real solution was to create a school dedicated to grade school students living in Guild's Lake Courts.

Guild's Lake School Begins

Guild's Lake School was built with no frills. One wartime design element was rapid egress; each of the classrooms had individual exits to the outside that could be opened in the summer to let air inside. There were no funds available to build laboratory or workshop spaces and the one large multi-purpose space served as cafeteria, auditorium, and gymnasium. Even with the construction of the new buildings, five of the first- and second-grade classrooms remained offsite. Of the five nurseries at Guild's Lake Courts "three centers, Guild's Street, Vaughn Street [35th Avenue, perhaps], and Goan Street, were transferred for operation by PPS and were opened in December, 1943, as grade one, two and three."⁴⁸

The grade school opened in 1944 and was a melting pot of students in regard to class and race. In the fall of 1943, the African American section of housing at Guild's Lake Courts was nearly complete. The six-acre site of the Guild's Lake School was on county-owned land. The school district exercised an option for the site on the south

side of NW Yeon Avenue just east of the intersection of NW Yeon, NW Kittredge, and St. Helen's Road. The application to build the twenty-two-room school building at a construction cost of \$170,000 was sent to the federal government in June 1943. "The school is designed to accommodate 1,350 pupils on double shifts"⁴⁹ (although the grade school at Guild's Lake Courts never operated on double shifts). The FWA approved \$179,000 for the construction of a single-story school building.⁵⁰ This rather large complex with a smokestack rising in the middle appears in the bottom of Figure 6-4. Except for a few straggly trees, it does not appear that there was much vegetation, let alone playfields, for the students.

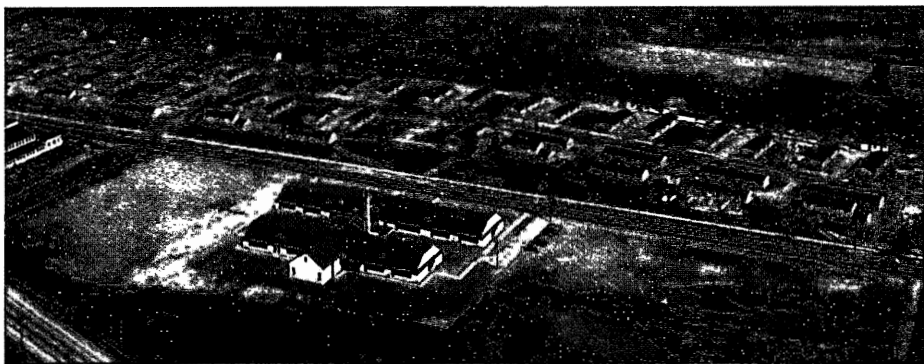


Figure 6-4. (photo) Aerial view of Guild's Lake School at NW Yeon Avenue and 44th St., a twenty-two-room school building with no visible play equipment in the schoolyard. Also in the image are some of the row houses occupied by African American residents. Photograph by Hugh Ackroyd, courtesy of Tom Robinson.

Guild's Lake School was located on NW Yeon Avenue at 44th Street and enrolled approximately 600 students for second through eighth grades. When it opened, the average class size was twenty-five students. The school did not operate in double shifts as originally proposed. Instead, to prevent bulging with students, the

kindergarten, first-grade, and some second-grade classrooms were located in other buildings where the demand for childcare was less than anticipated.

Cecil W. Posey was the school's principal and a stern disciplinarian. His job was challenging because of the broad spectrum of cultural and economic backgrounds of his students' families, a situation made difficult by the transitional nature of the housing where students lacked roots and pre-existing social capital. In an era when over 60 percent of children were able to walk or bike to school, schools were a neighborhood anchor: a photographer from the *Oregon Journal* captured the anxious mood at the school's opening day as children and their parents queued up on September 11, 1944. Their first introduction to Principal Posey was when he was helping students enroll in the new facility (see figures 6-5 and 6-6). Principal Posey wanted the students to be successful: "My hopes are that all boys and girls of all races, religions, and nationalities in all nations in the world will grow up and live in peace."⁵¹ Schooldays felt long for many of the students and quite a change from the half-days that had been offered at Chapman Grade School. Care for school-age children at the school building at NW 44th and Yeon existed beyond the school day itself—additional hours of supervised care were offered 6:30AM–8:45AM and 3:30PM–5:00 PM and from 6:30AM–5:00 PM on Saturdays.



Figure 6-5. (photo) Principal Cecil W. Posey registering students at their new school at Guild's Lake Courts, September 11, 1944. Text on back of photograph: "School Bells on Opening Day." *Oregon Journal* Collection. #184. Courtesy of the Oregon Historical Society.

Cecil W. Posey wrote messages in the *Guild's Lake School Paper*; Alice Hagen was kind enough to share four editions she had saved, saying, "You don't know how many closets these have been in." The message for the November 1946 edition of the paper reads:

Guild's Lake School is composed of over seven hundred pupils and twenty-five faculty members. This is the third year of our existence as a school. Many of the boys and girls now in our school have been here during the entire life of the school. Also, many parents have lived in the project since the beginning of the school. In a real sense, then, the school belongs to the parents and the children of the Guild's Lake area. These parents and children saw the beginning of the school and have been members of its organization during its entire lifetime....⁵²



Figure 6-6 (photo). Principal Cecil W. Posey poses for the camera. Courtesy of Alice Hagen.

Arnold Leppert lived at Guild's Lake Courts from 1943 to 1950 and graduated from eighth grade at Guild's Lake School. He saw a different side of Posey, whom he remembered as a handsome, charismatic man who later in life was his boss when Leppert became the principal at Chapman. Cecil W. Posey went on to be executive director of the Oregon Education Association in the 1950s. A number of interviewees described him as the physical disciplinarian to be feared. Dale Butler recalled Principle Posey using corporal discipline: "Yep, he dropped me right to my knees. My mother came unglued when I told her about it.... [W]e had Cecil over at the house and he was really talking fast."⁵³ Even Chuck Charnquist, whose mother had three children attend the school and who chaired the 305-member PTA in 1948,⁵⁴ was not spared the tough love of Principal Posey. Cecil W. Posey was deeply concerned about

the success of his students. Guild's Lake School was a difficult post because there had been no community history of familiarity common in public neighborhood schools.

My sophomore year in high school, I skipped classes for a couple of days to work as a Red Cross volunteer in the grade school [at Guild's Lake Courts] where refugees⁵⁵ from the Vanport Memorial Day flood, living in temporary trailers in the project, were being fed three meals a day in the cafeteria. My background working in my dad's restaurant as a dishwasher and waiter gave me the skills needed. Mr. Posey was very upset that I was missing school. We clashed over it, and I remember telling him it was none of his business. I wasn't attending his school anymore.⁵⁶



Figure 6-7. (photo) Teacher Ralph Tolson's eighth grade class at Guild's Lake School in 1946. Courtesy of Chuck Charnquist

Front from left: Victor Wassgreen, Albert Moore, Jim Johnson, Bob Meskel, Chuck Charnquist; second row: Suzanne Schaefer, LaLeta Nelson, Mary Spangle, Oleta "Skeezix" Fox, Helen Holder, Dolores Kufus, Delise Baltes, Sandra Baltes, Jeneane Fulton, Betty Ziegel; back row: Mr. Ralph Tolson, Stanley Anderson, Clydell Kingsbury, Bill Achatz, Domingo Vasquez, Orville Dahlen, Alan Miller, Ben Spangle, Doug Dunn, Leroy Ellis, Robert Parks, Lonnie Currier.

Sadly, even after the Guild's Lake School was complete, problems for pedestrian safety across these heavily used freight transportation corridors persisted. Traffic police were still in short supply in 1944, so older youth volunteers helped their fellow classmates cross the tracks. Chuck Charnquist recalled being one of the volunteers helping children cross the tracks after the Guild's Lake School opened. In 1945 the FWA allocated \$54,659 to build a temporary Kittredge overpass.⁵⁷ The two-span wooden structure was built over Kittredge Avenue between NW Yeon and Front Street; the first span crossed above a forty-four-foot railway spur and the second span over seventy-six feet of Northern Pacific tracks. None of the newspaper reports in the HAP scrapbooks mentioned the tragedy that was the catalyst for the overpass:

One day, Jimmy Williams, one of the African American members of our patrol, had taken a group of kids across and was returning to school when he was hit and killed instantly by an express train that came roaring through the crossing. A few days later I served as an honorary pallbearer at his funeral. I was 13 years old. It was the first funeral I had ever been involved in. It made an even greater lasting impression on me because ... [I witnessed] a funeral where the emotions of the African-American culture is at its highest point of expression. I can still envision the room and the people all these years later. A postscript to this story: Within weeks after the tragedy, the railroad partnered with the city to build an auto and pedestrian overpass at the crossing. It is still there today, known as the Kitteridge [sic] Viaduct. It should have been named the Jimmy Williams Viaduct.⁵⁸

There are a few possible reasons why the death of Jimmy Williams was not a part of the newspaper stories that discussed the risk to children walking and biking to the Guild's Lake School. One is that the public relations officials at the HAP were trying to protect its interests at Guild's Lake Courts and wanted to avoid the "Negro issue" at this development from entering a citywide debate. The second is that the overpass was already in the works and funded and that this was a tragedy of timing. The third would be that it simply was not a story of interest to the press, which sought to promote stories of hope and success amidst coverage of war news.

Ron Pedersen did not find it hard to fit into the school when his family arrived at Guild's Lake Courts. As a son of an itinerant sawmill worker, Ron had attended thirteen different schools in Oregon and Washington by the time he enrolled in the Guild's Lake School:

So it was easy for me to move in there [to] Guild's Lake [Courts] because I was used to the trying to get along with kids, and that sort of thing. Two of my cousins went to the same school and my sister went to the school, before she went into high school. And my brother went to the school too, so we had that in common.⁵⁹

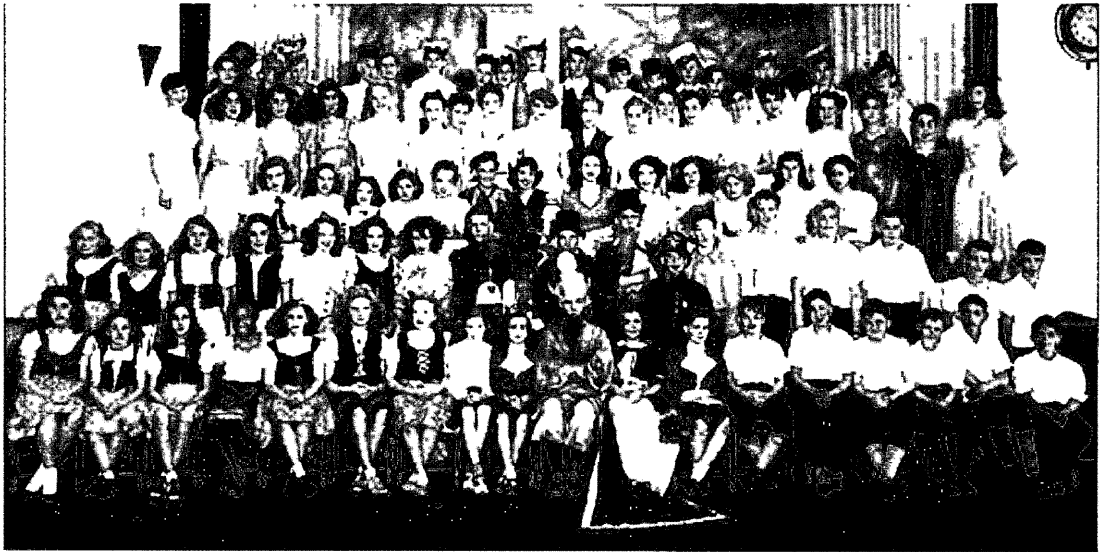


Figure 6-8. (photo) Guild's Lake School operetta "Puddin' Head the First," 1946. Photographer Leo F. Simon. Courtesy of Chuck Charnquist.

John Sweeney's recollection of his relationship with a fellow student at the school is an example of how during a period of patriotism African Americans were willing to seize onto the educational opportunities granted them—for many rural families from the South, this was their first opportunity. Figure 6-8 shows only a few students of color participating in the Operetta "Puddin' Head the First." (It is unclear if the sixth, seventh, and eighth graders volunteered or if this production, produced by the seventh-grade teacher Gladys Crawford [Stern], was a requirement.) According to Nancy Hart of *The Oregonian*: "It was quality entertainment."⁶⁰ The students at Guild's Lake School had opportunities to experience more than the basics taught in books. Chuck's seventh-grade teacher, Miss Crawford [Stern], had graduated as a music major at Willamette University. She made the most of her musical talents by

directing and producing operettas with students. “The operettas were huge productions involving more than 80 students in the school’s combination auditorium-cafeteria-gymnasium. It was one of the biggest events involving the Guild’s Lake [Courts] community that I can remember in my six years living there.”⁶¹ For students from the Deep South or timber company towns, the operettas preformed by the seventh and eighth graders must have been spectacular events.

While Jim Crow reigned in the consumer economy of Portland, it did not enter the public school classrooms at Guild’s Lake School. Parents of children might have feared more than the unsafe crossing at Kittredge; it is conceivable that they also feared the reaction of the white staff and families at Chapman School. Placing Guild’s Lake School adjacent to the African American section of the project made it an institution of inclusion. John Sweeney, who was white, recalls:

When I was in the third grade, there’s a nice September or October in a nice classroom and anyway, my teacher, Miss O’Leary, and in come Mr. Garber. I had two principals while I was there. Mr. Cecil Posey ... and, uh, Garber. I can’t remember his first name. But those guys were real short guys. Now I was nine years old. The deal was they weren’t much taller than I was. So Mr. Garber comes in there, and here’s this black couple and their son. He was 16 years old. Biggest human being in the school. Bigger than any of the teachers or anything. So I look in there and Miss O’Leary would look at Mr. Garber and the parents and back and forth and I was sitting there watching, and then she looks at me, back to my schoolbook. So anyway, next thing you know there is somebody at my desk. I looked up and saw Miss O’Leary and she says, “This is William. You’re gonna to help him. He knows his numbers and his letters.” So I scooted over. Nobody bullied me at Guild’s Lake School ‘cause I was William’s buddy....

Everything was going along real good and the deal is one time he invited me over to William’s house. Now William, he was going to be the first in his family to finish high school.... [I was in third] grade [and] they put him

in third grade. They were from the South.... They had to home school him.... I was helping him but I got invited over to the family where there were about ten people around.... They'd send a kid to school, at the end of the day they'd [the kid would] come home and do some chores, then after schoolwork, then after dinner, they would teach the rest of their parents [to read]. This was happening with a lot of immigrants. So he was doing the same thing but other blacks were there, 'cause there were other blacks that were older in the class. They'd be teaching their families.

So at the end of the third grade, I went to the fourth grade. William went to seventh for the first half of the year then he went to the eighth.... Well the deal is, he was a smart guy.... Oh, yeah [he was motivated].

And one of the things was my dad was in the army. He was gone for days, so my dad would come home Saturday afternoon on the bus and then Sunday night he'd go back. Well, one time I knew he was coming home 'cause he got off early, so I had invited William over to meet my dad. 'Cause I would talk about William, you know. William got to talk to my dad. William knew he'd [my father had] gone to the army when he was 17.... My dad said to my mom, "Throw another spud in the pot; we've got a guest for dinner. So, he and my dad talked for about three hours.... It was kind of dark and there was still some of that Southern racial crap going on so my dad walked him back over to his area so nobody bothered him.... He'd had a long talk and my dad had told me later he had encouraged him to stay and finish high school. Because so many people in the Depression had quit school early.

So lots and lots of people, just like now, we talk about all this going to college. The thing that worries me [today] is not the people not going to college; it's the people dropping out of high school. And that's the real problem.... What he did is, my dad says that you ought to come into the army. You'll be a lot smarter if you can stay and get your high school because so few people have high school at that time. You know colleges were starting up and just roaring with people coming out of the, back from World War II.⁶²

During Chuck's last year at Guild's Lake Courts, he attended Lincoln High.

Other young men opted for Benson High School; as Lincoln had a reputation for being tough on the kids from the "other side of the tracks." Arnold Leppert's experience

matched the reputation. The other pupils at Lincoln “referred to us as the kids from Guild’s Lake Swamp.”

It is interesting that the Chapman building that felt old and run down to Leppert in 1940 has remained in continuous operation and Guild’s Lake School, which was a modern facility in 1944, was relegated to being a PPS storage space after only operating for five school years and was eventually demolished.

There was little need to provide high school education for the residents. Classrooms were of little interest for young men eager to contribute labor for defense. In fact, employers in non-defense industries, from factories to farming to logging, were able to hire sixteen-year-olds and military recruits lying about their age. This shrank class sizes in upper grades to such an extent that there was a general concern about the well-being of these near-adults.

When Joe Kordic’s father died in 1947, his mother entered the workforce. She taught eighth grade at Guild’s Lake School after the May 1948 Vanport Flood. He reported: “The black kids had run the last two teachers out; Violet was brought in as a troubleshooter. African Americans were segregated in Portland schools because schools were set up by neighborhood.”⁶³ Violet’s class at Guild’s Lake School was integrated; the school community was in distress: the students knew that Guild’s Lake Courts was being torn down. Historian Rudy Pearson states that at this time, the educational environment for African Americans was un-nurturing and that until 1945 there were no African American teachers in PPS and those first hired in 1945 were in

Vanport.⁶⁴ Another student of the public federally funded public school was Dale

Butler:

When I was at Guild's Lake elementary school, yes, it was integrated. There was never any problem, you know. Nobody ever gave it any thought that I knew of. We had some people that came from the South. Took them a little while to get with the program. It was a fairly good building. When I went to grade school, it was quite a nice school. We had playground equipment. They ran two classes. Not any shifts, but they had two classes at the same time...one grade here, and one grade here. And then the shift changed, and then it would be two grades...so they were teaching four classes [rooms].... Kind of separated by a little hall, which went down and out. The teaching, as far as I could tell, was reading, writing, and arithmetic...and recess. We didn't have a lot of social studies, things that came into the curriculum at a much later date. When I went to Guild's Lake...to the main school...the one that had all of the upper grades.... I was trying to remember and it seemed to me the main school taught either through the fourth or fifth grade through the eight grade.⁶⁵

The line between childhood and adulthood became blurred for many young wartime Americans who left school and joined the work force or stayed home and cooked and raised younger siblings. One man, Howard C. Easton, interviewed for this project lived in Kellogg Park, another defense housing development.⁶⁶ He had a particularly difficult time trying to adapt to life in Portland and disliked school because of how the locals treated the new students. After a period of time playing hooky and then working in a wool mill, he enlisted. Although Howard was the only interviewee to discuss dropping out of school, this was not unusual for the war years. "In fact, so many teenagers were leaving school [nationwide] to take on full-employment that high-school enrollments declined by 1,200,000 from 1941 to 1944."⁶⁷

Residents of Guild's Lake Courts who attended high school offsite shared this experience of taunting by native Portlanders. Going to the Guild's Lake School typically shielded children from the hostility faced by these new migrants. Chuck Charnquist recalled, "Being in a brand new school building made it special for most of us. Especially so, because of the contrast of what we had experienced the previous year at Chapman."⁶⁸ Most students interviewed, like Chuck Charnquist, were excited to attend that first year in a building built exclusively for residents of Guild's Lake Courts. Eighth-grade boys like Chuck and Norval Clark still headed over to Chapman School each Wednesday for manual training with Mr. Joyce; they enjoyed making sailboats, clock stands, book stands, and tables.⁶⁹ On October 24, 1946, the boys started "making a puzzle for returned and convalescent servicemen."⁷⁰ It seems that girls and boys were often separated even for class pictures (see Figure 6-9).



Figure 6-9. (photo). Fifth-grade girls from Miss Doris Skelton's class with stucco school building in background May 28, 1946. Top row, left to right: unknown, Shirley McCulla, Rosella Robins, Clara Woods, Alice Hagen, unknown, unknown. Bottom row, left to right: Mary Sue Bartlitt, Yvonne Lavender, Sharon Jordon. Courtesy of Alice Hagen.

In 1947 conflict over the future use of the Guild's Lake School emerged. The building was valued at \$175,000 and the city and the FWA were in litigation over the value of the six acres of land attached to the school. The FWA had started a lease on the land in 1943 from Rushlight Steel, but it was unable to get a clear title to the land because there was a railroad right of way that Rushlight Steel had been seeking to acquire in addition to \$10,000 worth of liens.⁷¹ The court case was resolved setting the value of the land at \$13,800; "Mayor Earl Riley said Tuesday he would like to acquire the [Guild's Lake School] building eventually for a police training school, pistol range and a northwest precinct."⁷² The proposed school conversion failed to get public support; the adaptive reuse would have benefited a police department ridiculed already for overspending.

Community Centers

This mingling of viewpoints extended to the schoolrooms and recreation grounds, where there were no color lines observed in either the schoolrooms or on the baseball diamonds. The white kids played with the black kids—freely and willingly—proving, if nothing else, that racial feeling is something taught.⁷³

Guild's Lake Courts had five community centers for the use of residents. Every week over 10,000 kids visited these centers, "the largest being the Guam Street recreational center that played host to over 5,800 children a week. The facilities provided daycare for shipyard workers and kept kids off the street and out of trouble."⁷⁴ While this figure seems high, it could be interpreted that the source was

confusing “trips made” with “people served” at Guam Street. The residents of Guild’s Lake Courts were welcome to participate at activities at any one of the five centers on site. The Guild’s Street Community Center focused its activities for teenagers. Otherwise, typical daytime activities were geared for younger children, as some of the space was used for their schooling. On Sundays the centers were like the one-room schoolhouse in *Little House on the Prairie*—on Sundays they became churches. One *Community Activities: Guild’s Lake Courts* guide produced on January 1, 1945, was saved in a scrapbook of a former resident, as were programs from church services. The guide helped families locate activities of interest. The page written by the manager of Guild’s Lake Courts directs families to participate in activities at the community centers as a way to build community (see Figure 6-12). Figure 6-10 shows schoolchildren helping their community by collecting newspapers for the war effort. In the background is the Gona Street Community Center.



Figure 6-10. (photo cropped) Guild's Lake Clean-up Week Paper Drive, July 1944, in front of Gona Street Community Center. Courtesy of the City of Portland Archives.

When African Americans arrived to work in Portland they were not seamlessly accepted by the existing urban African American population of 2,000. Members of the tremendous influx of 20,000 African Americans were limited in their recreational activities because of racism and because the preexisting community had not developed

a Harlem-like entertainment center. Sue Bishop, in her unpublished 1958 work “Negro Housing in Portland,” touches on the void faced by the migrants: “Many of the new migrants were unmarried young men who, because they were segregated from most recreational activities in the city, often resorted to illegal means of ‘letting off steam.’”⁷⁵

This lack of structured activity nodes within in the city made the recreation centers vital even after the war, although, according to the *Second Annual Report of the Urban League of Portland*, in 1946 the postwar population of African Americans leveled off at 12,000 as work opportunities had dried up. As Bishop again comments:

The community now has no choice but to integrate or starve these people. At the close of 1946, it seems that the choice had been in favor of starving them. At that time, out of approximately 4,500 Negroes in the labor market, about 1,500 were out of jobs... The Urban League reports that “Most Portland Negroes had settled down to a life of dreadful mediocrity and decided that white folks were mean, un-democratic and hypocritical, and that such traits were racial characterizations of Caucasians.” These feelings stem from the practices such as this, common in Portland at the time: All but one major downtown establishment for public accommodation (restaurant, theaters, etc.) practiced discrimination on the basis of race.⁷⁶

Northwest Portland was no more accommodating than downtown. The only restaurant that served African Americans was the Chinese restaurant near Montgomery Ward. There were no signs posted to inform the passersby that establishments were exclusively for whites, but the policy was enforced by employees. Because there were no signs saying, “we do not serve people of color,” white children were often unaware of the color line. One story particularly illuminates this invisible divide. Chuck Charnquist bonded with his fellow schoolmates who also delivered

papers. These young men all attended Guild's Lake School and were members of the same integrated Boy Scout troop. One incident after school with his friends, Jerry Parsons, Victor Wassgren and Albert Moore (a young African American), really taught the friends a lesson in discrimination.

Even as seventh graders we always had pocket money from our earnings on our paper routes, we also were able to do it the adult way when it came to eating lunch. There was a restaurant across Vaughn Street from the big Montgomery Ward store and located right on the route between the two schools. [These boys went from their school at Guild's Lake by bike to Chapman for a manual training class.] It served great hamburgers and milkshakes. That became our lunch place. Nice, juicy hamburgers and big milkshakes served in frosty metal mixer cans. Three of us would do this every time we headed to Chapman. But Albert always seemed to find a reason not to go with us. We kept bugging him to come along, dangling the teaser of the wonderful hamburgers and milkshakes. So, one Wednesday he gave in. We normally go to the restaurant in advance of the usual rush of workers from Wards and the nearby American Can Company plant and had a favorite table near the door. This particular Wednesday we were particularly hungry and fired up for our delicious regular fare, especially since we had been bragging to Albert. The waitress came to our table and took orders from Victor, Jerry and me. Then she looked at Albert and said, "We don't serve niggers in here." Albert, without saying a word, quietly got up and left. We sat stunned. I know, even for seventh graders, a lot of soul searching went on in the next moments.... After that, we all carried our lunches in brown paper bags and ate with Albert when we got to Chapman School.⁷⁷

It became clear that the Guild's Lake community centers offered many African Americans one of the few opportunities for entertainment. The pre-existing African American community had worshipped downtown at First Baptist at SW 12th and Taylor. The congregation there constructed a church for African Americans on Vancouver Ave., but this new church was too far for the African Americans at Guild's Lake to travel to for Sunday service. So "Mt. Sinai Community Baptist Church was

founded in 1941 in Guild's Lake as Gona Street Community Church with Reverend J. B. Shoats as pastor. It incorporated in 1952 as Mt. Sinai Community Interracial Church located at 602 NE Prescott Street."⁷⁸

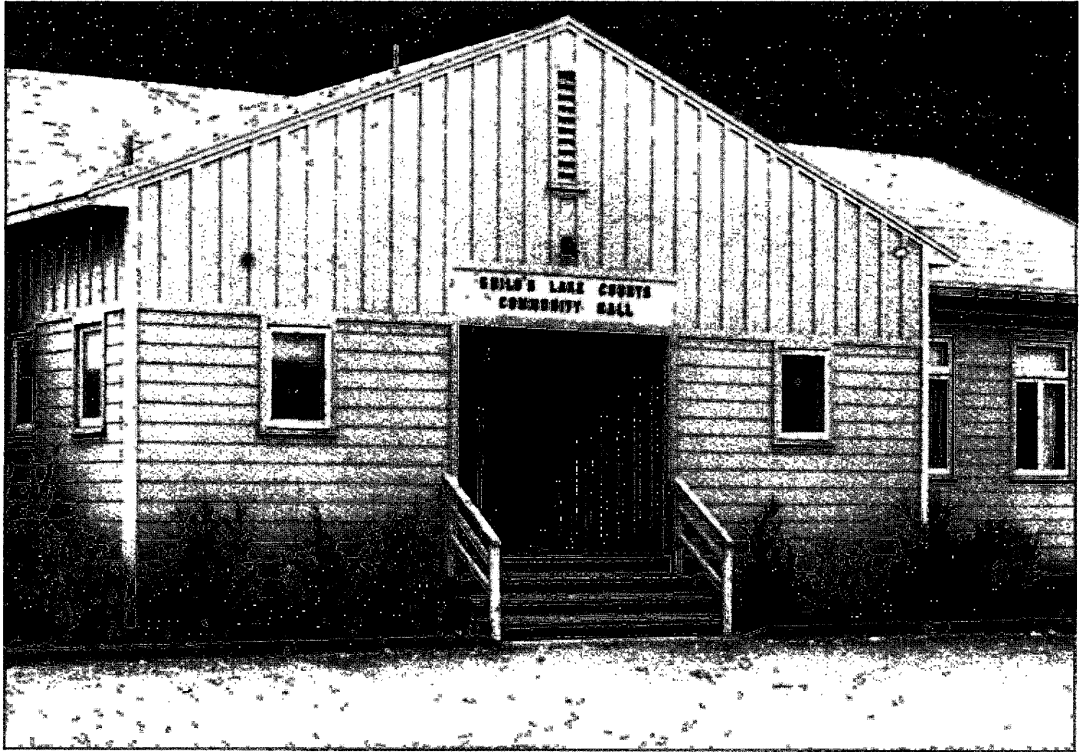


Figure 6-11. (photo cropped) This community hall was one of five recreation centers at Guild's Lake Courts, c. 1944. This is the community center designed by Morris Whitehouse; some adjustments were made to the plan linking structures (see Figure 7-1). Photographer Leonard Delano. Courtesy of Norman Gholston.

Gona Street Community Center

January 1, 1945

Dear Resident:

This booklet contains schedules and information about "Community Activities".

"Community Activities" includes whatever you and your family and your neighbors want to do. Some of these are: Church Work, Nursery School, Recreation, Counseling Service, Councils, Public Health Clinics, Adult Discussion Club, Boy Scouts, YMCA, and many, many other groups.

The printed schedule could only list those activities which have already been started. If you have any ideas or activities which you would like to start, or if you have some time which you would like to put to use as a Volunteer Community Helper, do not hesitate to call our Project Services Adviser.

Remember, our "Community" of Guild's Lake is only what you, the residents, want it to be. The more you participate, the finer we can be.



L. J. Wilkins
Manager

Figure 6-12. (pamphlet) Introduction to activities at recreation centers at Guild's Lake Courts in 1945 by manager L. J. Wilkins. Courtesy of Bob Hilger.

When interviewing former residents it was difficult to determine which community center they utilized, unless they recalled their home address for their years at Guild's Lake Courts. Even selecting the center close to a known address was inexact since many interviewees recalled moving to different homes during their tenure at Guild's Lake Courts. The only center for which there is detailed information

from the interview process was the Gona Street Center, and this information is almost solely attributable to one source, Maria Raz Dunlop, who worked there. Bob Hilger's sister's scrapbook contained a *Community Activities Guide* produced January 1, 1945, which also illuminated details of activities offered at the community centers.



Figure 6-13. (photo) Cooking Class. “Miss Peterson is the lady, my mom is sitting on Miss Peterson’s right side, Norman Jean is standing up.” Courtesy of Alice Hagen.

From the interview with Dunlop, it became clear that the homes around Gona Street had a population density that contributed the culture and high level of usage at the center. Maria’s recollections of the living conditions and community health concerns make sense, considering this center served the most isolated residential population at Guild’s Lake Courts. African Americans were limited to an east and west sector of division 35091 of Guild’s Lake Courts (see Map 3.3). In this

community all units were occupied by African Americans; many had elected not to send their children to public school in Portland until the completion of Guild's Lake School in 1944. Additionally, children were not required to attend school once they turned 16. The high density and the need for activities for children and youth made Gona Street a heavily utilized community center.

Maria even recalled that the Gona Street Community Center employees were concerned initially about integration at the dances held in the gym on Friday and Saturday nights:

We did have a problem at first, because we would have dances, big dances. We'd have them in the gym here. Well we didn't have much money for a live band, unless there was for something special.... The big question was: Should we have a dance, what would we do if the blacks would invite us to dance? Because at that time that was early 4'0s.... That might have been a problem. So we were really contemplating what we should do about a dance. We didn't have trouble when we decided to have it. [The dances were] for everybody [age and race]. Now you know, I had the luncheon group which was mixed black and white—nice women. All of them. In fact, one of them called me a few years ago, and I was so surprised after all these years why she'd call me. But it was nice talking to her. I imagine they are all just about dead by now.... I'm eighty-six, you know.⁷⁹

Maria was unclear in her use of "us." Who attended these dances? Perhaps "us" refers only to her fellow white co-workers and not to whites in general.

Maria worked at the Gona Street Community Center for at least three years, commuting by public transportation six days a week from her childhood home in Multnomah Village. Among her co-workers were Dorothy Fettis and Kenneth Underhill. Just as Maria was able to bring in her own interests into the activities offered, so according to Maria was her co-worker Kenneth with his boxing classes.

So, we had boxing which none of the others did, I don't think. One of the men directors was interested in boxing so...we already had a boxer who came out and taught. We had a lot of kids the first day, but as soon as he had them in there jumping rope and doing all this extra stuff...they lost interest, because they just wanted to box.... So anyway it finally fell through with...the regular boxer. But the director used to have those little kids going. He had enough gloves for six [students]....⁸⁰

Boxing was offered on Tuesdays and Fridays from 8:00 to 10:00AM at Guam Street for residents over thirteen years old, and again at the same time on Thursdays at the Rental Office Community Center. Other activities offered at the various community centers were pool, table tennis (ping pong), volleyball, wrestling, crafts, badminton, singing, tumbling, basketball, guitar, knitting, and model airplane building. On Sundays the sites offered various church services. Curiously, since St. Patrick's was so close, Catholic mass was also offered there.

Once married, Dunlop continued her career with Portland Parks and Recreation as a recreation director at University Courts, where she lived with her husband when they were newlyweds after the war. During her single years as an assistant director at the Gona Street Recreation Center she was quite active. Her favorite activity was teaching folk dancing, which reflected the roots of her Swiss immigrant parents. In 1945 folk dance was offered for children between the ages of six and twelve every Saturday 2:00–4:00PM. She enjoyed this much more than the exercise classes she taught, and because of the mass enrollment, the class had live piano accompaniment, unlike the other dance classes she taught to canned music.

I don't know if they [blacks] could have gone to others or not [the other four community centers]. They could have probably gone.... There was a certain amount of problems because most of these people came from the

South at that time. So we have a lot of Southern whites and Southern blacks, so we had a lot of fights between the blacks and the whites...and often they would have a razor blade. And they'd be [fighting] and I could get in between the two big teenagers and they respected me enough in those days.... Then I would have [the] kid [in] this big room here [at the community center that] could be divided into two rooms.... I don't remember where the doors were. We could either have a big one or the little [ones] and I started the folk dancing, the circle dancing for the little kids. In this room. And I started with, I don't know, all girls. Ten, maybe fourteen. It got so I couldn't get any boys. Finally one boy came in. And then when one of them did, then I started getting lots of boys. I got so that I had to have it in the gym, because there were fifty or so. I'd have to go in the gym and mark out spots to show where to stand. Have it all ready. Because when you have a lot of kids, you have to keep them organized constantly.⁸¹

Maria did not feel that during the hours of operation that there were many concerns with juvenile delinquency. The staff's main issue was that at night residents would break into the community center building—teenagers used the space as a “romantic hideaway” and one young man slept in the attic. The first use was an ongoing concern: “Teenagers would use our building [as a semi-private place to have sexual intercourse]. In the morning the janitor would say she saw all these condoms all over. They'd use 7-Up for douches, shake the bottle, you know; I lived this sheltered life till I got to Guild's Lake. I always say I grew up in Guild's Lake.”⁸²

The other story of a young man perplexed the interviewer enough to ask Maria for details:

Maria Dunlop: Well...that's why they hung around the community center.... They didn't have jobs, they didn't have a lot of [space in their homes]. They didn't go to school.... That's probably why they were around there so much. I had one boy that lived in the attic.... I didn't know it.... He went up into the hole....

Tanya March: So, this is interesting. So you had a young man living in the attic of your community center?

Maria Dunlop: Yeah, till we figured it out. And I remember we took bats and waited for him to come down.

Tanya March: Out of the little hole?

Maria Dunlop: Out of the trapdoor. You know, went up into the attic.

Tanya March: Did his parents live in the housing?

Maria Dunlop: Yeah, I think so.

Tanya March: Somebody who was just trying to get more space? It doesn't seem like everyone got their own bedrooms.

Maria Dunlop: Well, one thing I heard was that a lot of these black people, there were two or three families living in one of those apartments at a time.⁸³

The need to provide activities for teenagers was such that one of the community centers in 1945 was referred to as the "Teenage Community Building"; the other four were Rental Office Center, Guam Street Community Center, Gona Street Community Building, and 29th Avenue Community Building. The Teenage Center was also referred to as the Guild's Street Community Center. Teenagers who were not enrolled in school and not employed were as much a concern as babies and preschool children. The nursery centers provided care for the young children of working mothers; the community centers provided a more casual care for teenagers while their parents worked or slept. It is interesting that activities ran seven days a week from 6:00AM until 10:00PM. At the reunion, after the interview, Maria looked over her journals and could not believe the long hours she had once worked.

So between the nursery school, the community centers, and the public school, a number of structures were in place to focus on youth activities. Although no one recalled using the public library station at the rental office that was open from Monday to Saturday in two-hour blocks throughout the week, many individuals remembered formal activities that were part of the Housing Authority's efforts to keep the

community safe and the young adults out of mischief. One of those activities was Junior Volunteer Fire Drill which met on Fridays from 6:30 to 7:30PM at the rental office (next to fire station) and also on Thursdays at Gona Street Community Building from 6:30 to 7:45PM. These youth worked with Captain Fred Gleichman to form a Volunteer Fire Brigade.

These volunteer activities will be discussed more in more detail in chapter 7. The onsite activity nodes do not tell the entire scope of childhood experience at the development. The majority of households chose not to use the daycare centers and in the early years many children did not attend school. Once lessons were over at the community centers, opportunities for further enrichment were obtained with limited if any adult supervision.

¹ Manly Maben, *Vanport* (Portland: Oregon Historical Society Press, 1987), 66.

² Margaret Crawford, "Daily Life on the Home Front: Women, Blacks and the Struggle for Public Housing," in *World War II and the American Dream*, edited by Donald Albrecht, 98–108 (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995).

³ "Linnton School Gains Pupils" *Guild's Lake School Paper*, Spring 1945, p. 11. Courtesy of Charles H. Charnquist. This explains why there are so few African Americans shown in the school pictures, the only residents of Gona were African American and they were sent away midway though the first school year at Guilds Lake School.

⁴ Suzanna Schaeffer, "The School Orchestra," *Guild's Lake School Paper*, October 1945, p. 4. Courtesy of Charles H. Charnquist.

⁵ "The History of Guilds Lake" *Guild's Lake School Paper*, Fall 1951, p. 3. Courtesy of Charles H. Charnquist.

⁶ Crawford, "Daily Life on the Home Front," 126.

⁷ Philip Funigiello, *The Challenge to Urban Liberalism: Federal City Relations during World War II* (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1978), 45.

⁸ Chauncey Del French, *Waging War on the Home Front: An Illustrated Memoir of World War II* (Corvallis, OR: Oregon State University Press, 2004), 48–50, 114.

⁹ William M. Tuttle Jr., *"Daddy's Gone to War": The Second World War in the Lives of America's Children* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 75.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 90.

¹¹ The Fruit and Flower Nursery Mission Day School facility was opened in 1908 at SW Market and 12th Avenue. The original services were available Monday–Saturday from 6AM to 7PM. This program and the Friendly House program are the only nursery schools still operating in Oregon from the war

period. The Fruit and Flower Mission was started by a number of young elite ladies of Portland who brought fruit and flowers to local hospitals and later formed a charity organization.

¹² Now known as United Way.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 82.

¹⁴ Kesselman does not cite her source for this information and reports that there were only twenty nurseries, and in Table 6-2 there are twenty-four schools according to my own calculations, if each of the nursery schools at Guild's Lake Courts is included individually they must have been converted to grade schools very early on. Amy Kesselman, *Fleeting Opportunities: Women Shipyard Workers in Portland and Vancouver during World War II and Reconversion* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1990), 74, 84.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 84.

¹⁶ Maben, *Vanport*, 63.

¹⁷ Kesselman, *Fleeting Opportunities*, 84.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 85.

¹⁹ "The Kaiser Child Service Centers," interview with Lois Meek Stolz, in *Early Childhood Education, Living History Interviews, Book 2: Care of the Children of Working Mothers*, edited by James L. Hymes, Jr. (Carmel, CA: Hacienda Press, c. 1978); Danielle Hopkins, *Fruit and Flower: The History of Oregon's First Day Care Center* (Portland, OR: Fruit and Flower Childcare Center, 1979), 50.

²⁰ Crawford, "Daily Life on the Home Front," 125.

²¹ Hopkins, *Fruit and Flower*, p. 50.

²² Fruit and Flower Files, Annual Report 1947, Guild's Lake Branch.

²³ The information in this paragraph appeared in pamphlet published January 1, 1945. "Community Activities: Guild's Lake Courts", courtesy Scrapbook of Bob Hilgar.

²⁴ Janice Bell, interview. *First Guild's Lake Courts Reunion held at McMenamin's Tavern and Pool*, DVD (2007; Portland, OR); Gloria Cash, interview. *First Guild's Lake Courts Reunion held at McMenamin's Tavern and Pool*, DVD (2007; Portland, OR).

²⁵ Hopkins. *Fruit and Flower*, 52.

²⁶ Minutes of Fruit and Flower Board, October 11, 1945, Fruit and Flower files, Portland, OR.

²⁷ Minutes of Fruit and Flower Board, April 1946, Fruit and Flower files, Portland, OR.

²⁸ Minutes of Fruit and Flower Board, December 8, 1949, Fruit and Flower files, Portland, OR.

²⁹ Hopkins, *Fruit and Flower*, p. 52.

³⁰ Annual Fruit and Flower report, 1945, Fruit and Flower files, Portland, OR.

³¹ Fruit and Flower is still in operating in NW Portland and has maintained an archive of materials. Unfortunately, the organizational memory glazes over the 1940s program at Guild's Lake.

³² Report to the Fruit and Flower Board, July 1948, Fruit and Flower files, Portland, OR.

³³ Annual Meeting, 1950, Fruit and Flower files, Portland, OR.

³⁴ "10,000 New Students Here Put School Roll at Peak." *The Oregonian*, October 16, 1942, p. 1.

³⁵ Ann Maracotta, "Portland School Bells will ring Tuesday: Change in Hours made to meet war needs," *Oregon Journal*, September 6, 1942.

³⁶ "School Jam," *Oregon Journal*, August 11, 1942, sec 2, p. 2.

³⁷ Meeting Minutes September 5, 1943. Scrapbook, Minutes, Record Series 0605-08, 1940-1951, HAP Files, City of Portland Archives, Portland, OR.

³⁸ "Schools Help Finance War." *The Oregonian*, December 12, 1943, sec. 2, p. 4.

³⁹ A number of interviewees attended St. Patrick's but the parish school is not included in this study of Guild's Lake Courts history of integration and spontaneous community building.

⁴⁰ Kindergarten and first and second grades were taught at the 35th Avenue and 29th Avenue Community Centers. When the grade school opened, some of these classrooms at the Gona Community Center were rededicated as day nursery centers for younger children. PPS District One operated and staffed all these school facilities.

⁴¹ "School Voted for Summer." *The Oregonian*, May 27, 1943, sec. 1, p. 15.

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- ⁴² “Schools Show Gain of 3,134,” *The Oregonian*, September 8, 1943, p. 1.
- ⁴³ Ethan Johnson and Felicia Williams, “Desegregation and Multiculturalism in Portland Public Schools,” *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 111, no. 1 (2010): 6–7.
- ⁴⁴ “Five Portland Schools Set to Operate ‘Double Shift,’” *The Oregonian*, September 5, 1943, p. 14.
- ⁴⁵ “School Opens for Thousands,” *The Oregonian*, September 7, 1943, p. 9.
- ⁴⁶ “Section News,” *Guilds Lake School Paper*, November 1946, p. 4. Courtesy of Alice Hagen.
- ⁴⁷ “Double Shifts Cause Trouble, Board Told by Ann Marcotte,” *Oregon Journal*, Dec. 3, 1943, p. 7.
- ⁴⁸ “Double Shifts Cause Trouble, Board Told by Ann Marcotte,” *Oregon Journal*, Dec. 3, 1943, p. 7.
- ⁴⁹ Scrapbook, *The Oregonian*, June 10, 1943, p. 13, HAP Files, Record Series 0605-08, 1940–1951, City of Portland Archives.
- ⁵⁰ Scrapbook, *The Oregonian*, October 26, 1943, p. 9, HAP Files, Record Series 0605-08, 1940–1951, City of Portland Archives.
- ⁵¹ Cecil W. Posey, “Spring is Here,” *Guild’s Lake School Paper*, April 1948, p. 1. Courtesy of Alice Hagen.
- ⁵² Cecil W. Posey, “Message from the Principle,” *Guild’s Lake School Paper*, November 1946, p. 2. Courtesy of Alice Hagen.
- ⁵³ Dale Butler, interview by Tanya March, March 24, 2007, audio recording, Portland, OR.
- ⁵⁴ Ray Ellsworth, “Parent-Teacher Association,” *Guild’s Lake School Paper*, April 1948, p. 8. Courtesy of Alice Hagen.
- ⁵⁵ I have consciously elected to use “evacuee” instead of the more pejorative term “refugee” except within quotes. The term “refugee” in the World War II period clearly describes the condition of Jews fleeing European countries by immigrating to North and South American countries. The usage of the term “refugee,” as linked to immigrants (not migrants), in the cases of victims of the Vanport Flood and destruction of Katrina, implies that these victims are outsiders and not members of their own communities. “Refugee” denotes an individual who makes an active choice by taking flight from his or her home country to escape danger. Vanport Flood victims had no choice and attempted to remain a part of their Oregon community.
- ⁵⁶ Charles Charnquist, “The Guild’s Lake Story,” unpublished memoirs, 2006, Portland, OR, p. 14.
- ⁵⁷ Scrapbook, *Daily Journal Commerce*, Jan. 29, 1945, and Feb. 1, 1945, Record Series 0605-08, 1940–1951, HAP files, City of Portland Archives, Portland, OR.
- ⁵⁸ Charnquist, “The Guild’s Lake Story,” 13 & 14.
- ⁵⁹ Ronald Pedersen, interview by Tanya March, September 12, 2006, audio recording, Vancouver, WA.
- ⁶⁰ Nancy Hart, “School Cast Stars in ‘Puddin’ Head,’” *The Oregonian*, May 30, 1946, p. 9.
- ⁶¹ Charnquist, “The Guild’s Lake Story,” 11.
- ⁶² John Sweeney, interview by Tanya March, November 2, 2007, audio recording, Portland, OR.
- ⁶³ Joe Kordic interview. *First Guild’s Lake Courts Reunion held at McMenamin’s Tavern and Pool*, DVD (2007; Portland, OR).
- ⁶⁴ Rudy Pearson, “African Americans in Portland, Oregon, 1940–1950: Living and Working Conditions—A Social History,” unpublished dissertation, Washington State University (May 1996), 78, 109.
- ⁶⁵ Dale Butler, interview by Tanya March, March 24, 2007, audio recording, Portland, OR.
- ⁶⁶ Howard C. Easton, interview by Tanya March, April 16, 2007, audio recording, Milwaukee, OR.
- ⁶⁷ Scrapbook, Minutes, Record Series 0605-08, 1940–1951, HAP Files, City of Portland Archives, Portland, OR.
- ⁶⁸ Charnquist, “The Guild’s Lake Story,” 11.
- ⁶⁹ “Manual Training,” *Guild’s Lake School Paper*, April 1947, p. 7. Courtesy of Alice Hagen.
- ⁷⁰ “Manual Training,” *Guilds Lake School Paper*, November 1946, p. 11. Courtesy of Alice Hagen.
- ⁷¹ “Guild’s Lake Acreage School Going to Court,” *The Sunday Oregonian*, October 19, 1947, p. 2a. Record Series 0605-08, 1940–1951, HAP files, City of Portland Archives, Portland, OR.

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- ⁷² “Court Sets Value On School Site,” *The Oregonian*, October 23, 1947, p. 9. Record Series 0605-08, 1940–1951, HAP files, City of Portland Archives, Portland, OR.
- ⁷³ Del French, *Waging War on the Home Front*, 11.
- ⁷⁴ Richard H. Engeman, “The People of Guild’s Lake,” <http://www.history.pdx.edu/guildslake/> (accessed Jan 20, 2009).
- ⁷⁵ Sue Bishop, “Negro Housing in Portland,” unpublished senior thesis, University of Oregon School of Journalism, Eugene, OR (1958), 11.
- ⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 12.
- ⁷⁷ Charles Charnquist, “A Lesson in Discrimination,” unpublished memoirs, 2006, Portland, OR.
- ⁷⁸ Otto and Verdell Rutherford, *Cornerstones of Community: Buildings of Portland’s African American History* (Portland, OR: Bosco-Milligan Foundation, 1997), 78.
- ⁷⁹ Maria (Raz) Dunlop, interview by Tanya March, July 18, 2007, audio recording, Portland, OR. Drawing of interest in pre-interview.
- ⁸⁰ *Ibid.*
- ⁸¹ *Ibid.*
- ⁸² *Ibid.*
- ⁸³ *Ibid.*

CHAPTER 7:

CHILDHOOD PLAY: INDPENDENCE AND RISK

Introduction

This chapter explores the recreational activities of the youth living in Guild's Lake Courts, from unorganized dramatic play to structured volunteer activities. Along with chapter 6, it covers their daily life from early childhood through the eighth grade. Daily life for the children in defense housing communities was quite rich, in contrast to life for the working adults. These children were able to explore and interact with the un-programmed physical space in ways both magical and daunting. They were permitted an amazing amount of freedom and personal responsibility, spending long hours at play unsupervised. This freedom can be attributed to their parents' long and unconventional work hours, rural cultural norms, and the proximity of a large peer group population. Guild's Lake Courts was situated on 300 acres alongside the Willamette River straddling the frontier between the developed City of Portland and the undeveloped Tualatin Mountains, providing the setting for a juxtaposition of rural and urban offsite free-time activities. While the youngest children adapted to the limitations of onsite activities, the project's older youth launched themselves out of its environs to become explorers of the city and/or the wilderness, depending on their individual temperament.

During the war years, the Tualatin Mountains, a spur of the northern Oregon Coast Range often referred to as Portland's West Hills, contained only one public park, Macleay Park, acquired by the city in 1897. The West Hills gained a second public park in 1948, when Forest Park was officially dedicated. This second-growth forestland on steep slopes proved unfit for construction, given the available technology of the time, and much of the land had ended up under county control after land speculators failed to pay their taxes during the 1930s. The West Hills softened the visual impact of the sparsely planted terrain of bleak sand flats where the defense homes were built. Many of the children living in Guild's Lake Courts were able to explore this area and the river's banks unsupervised for days at a time.

Dale Butler recalled his childhood experiences in the park:

Oh, up in Macleay Park? We used to hike up there. Kids that I ran around with [from Guild's Lake Courts], we lived on the side of that hill in Macleay Park. Now where all the homeless camp up the trail, that wasn't done then. In fact, there wasn't any homeless because everyone had a job, because the war was on. But us kids used to just live up in the park, particularly in the summertime.¹

Opportunities for Freedom

Like all the defense housing in the region, the Guild's Lake Courts dwelling units were cramped. Often households had to use the living area of their unit for sleeping, since bedrooms were in short supply. Sometimes the adults had to sleep at odd hours because of variable work shifts, and the walls were thin, even between units, so it was common courtesy to encourage the children to play outside the home. Additionally, children of the 1940s, in sharp contrast to children today, had fewer

ways to occupy themselves indoors other than their chores. Rainy days were the worst for the young residents. Janice Bell remembered, “On a rainy day it was terrible to have to be in, because the places were so small... [You could only c]olor or play with your dolls or, you know, something like that.”²

Youngsters would wait, wishing the rain would stop so that their friends would come knocking to go out and play.³ Children inside were expected to do chores. Cleaning was more labor intensive; for example, laundry was hung on a clothesline to dry (outside if the weather was sunny or inside the home if it was raining) and electric dishwashers and vacuum cleaners were nowhere to be found and women were lucky to have washing machines. To make matters worse, children in this era also experienced rationing, which limited their access to material goods like toys. As a result of all these factors, the children preferred to explore the grounds of the project, the nearby, undeveloped lands, and the downtown area to remaining inside.

Not all women became “welder bees” but those who did enter the assembly lines struggled to balance their roles as mothers with their roles as providers. Mothers entered the workforce and, being new to the city, many families were unable to rely on traditional kin relationships for assistance with childcare. Although it was not uncommon for workers to encourage family members back home to migrate to the defense jobs, which often left older children to watch over their siblings and cousins, many residents allowed their children to devise their own amusements. Typically, children of working mothers adapted well to the freedom offered by their mothers’ absence.

The mothers of younger children dissatisfied with childcare arrangements often opted to stay at home. Vast access to freedom for the children was not affected by the mother's presence in the home. Within the estimated 2,000 Guild's Lake Courts children of grade school age in 1944, there were many peers in close proximity to have as constant playmates. In Guild's Lake Courts children outnumbered adults. The adults felt there was safety in numbers because the children migrated to Ward's each other, and the older children were trusted to protect the younger ones.

Unlike the isolated defense housing projects of Vanport, University Homes, and Columbia Villa, the location of Guild's Lake Courts gave the children access to downtown Portland. City life in Portland's downtown core provided a contrast to the rich natural geography of the river and the hills. All three regions just outside of the development's boundaries were ripe for exploration.

Geography of Race: Segregation and Class

The bulk of the housing in Guild's Lake Courts consisted of two large clusters, one for whites and one for African Americans. This use of geographic segregation in public housing developments was not unusual; it was characteristic nationally until 1974. In Richmond, California, for example, public housing units for whites were intentionally placed as a buffer between the pre-existing white community and the public housing area designated for African Americans. The units for whites in Guild's Lake Courts had greater access to the heart of the Northwest Portland community and were less dependent on onsite community facilities. The residences of their African

American counterparts, located north of NW Kittredge Avenue, presented geographical as well as discriminatory barriers. The African American children were forced to be more restricted to the NW Gona Street section of the project where structured free-time activities were provided by Portland Parks and Recreation and Portland Public Schools at the community center in that community. Structured activities, like the fire brigades, church services, and dances were segregated.

The residential segregation forced a segregation of play that was increasingly challenged once friendships formed across color lines at the public school. These children, many of whom had traveled great distances to relocate with their parents to defense housing, were creating new social networks unfettered by their families' regional cultural norms. African American children from the South were unaccustomed to having so many white folks around, but they adapted quickly. What is truly amazing about these networks was how they traversed and transcended both the class and the race stratifications of adult society. Young residents of every race and class seized upon the opportunities for volunteerism, sports, exploration, and creative play both on- and offsite that led to lifetime friendships.

For many of the children, rubbing elbows with children from a variety of different classes, religious and racial backgrounds was a new experience. Interviewees, the children of Guild's Lake Courts, typically were interested in sharing their memories because their formative years at Guild's Lake Courts had been a pleasantly transformative experience where they were able to set aside the past and

work together in the creation of a new community that had emerged overnight. A lot of this character building occurred outside their homes and classrooms.

Shopping and Commercial Entertainment

The lack of consumer opportunities in the Guild's Lake District did not discourage residents, as they were aware that the project was never intended to be a self-contained community. Its commercial offerings were bare-bones operations. Residents were expected to purchase most of their commodities from pre-existing off-site retail establishments.

In contrast, Vanport was a self-contained community, complete with shops, schools, and a theater. As one Vanport resident described it, there were “wonderful shopping centers and [a] theater augmented by a bakery in there, a restaurant or small café with just snacks, you know, like doughnuts and coffee and ice cream—that kind of thing. Real nice stores.”⁴ Vanport was self-contained, quite a contrast to the retail experience awaiting residents of Guild's Lake Courts.

Consumerism was not an identifiable free-time activity for this generation. In fact, the most critical aspect of retail activity for children was the lack of purchases made on their behalf—a lingering reality from the Depression. During the war all children had very few toys; rationing and collecting scrap metal encouraged a non-material-based culture of childhood. Purchasing activities by children were limited primarily to buying food staples for the family.

Darlene Hurd noted how children had fewer possessions at the time:

When I grew up you took care of stuff because you didn't know when you were going to get another one [clothes and toys].... You see, we didn't have a lot of clothes because people wore them every day, the same clothes. At St. Patrick's we had a white blouse and a navy skirt.⁵

Darlene was fortunate that her parents had brought along the family's piano. She played piano every night and was a voracious reader of library books. Though employment opportunities were bountiful, it appears that the parents of these children had learned a fair amount of thrift, having just lived through the Great Depression. For some, this was the first time their families were able to save money.

PBR Food Centers

Harold J. Todhunter had leases with HAP to operate two small grocery stores, named PBR Food Centers, one in division 35091 on NW Gona Street and the other in division 35026 south of the confluence of the roads NW Wake Street and NW Wake Court just off of St. Helens Road within the community building (see Figure 7-1). These were the only onsite stores in Guild's Lake Courts, and they operated only during the war years. With a limited selection of goods, they were more akin to today's convenience stores than a full-service market.



Figure 7-1. (photo) PBR Food Center within the Guild's Street Community Center in Guild's Lake Courts just off Saint Helen's Road. This retail space had functioned as the rental office for a brief period in 1942. HAP collection, 1944. Courtesy of the City of Portland Archives.

The managers of Guild's Lake Courts struggled to get residents to live in the more remote sections of the project that did not have access to a nearby full-service food market. In that era, food shopping was frequent, because most residences had only a small icebox with just two shelves for food, and the ice lasted only a few days. When gas was rationed, families did not wish to drive to carry food long distances. Young children were often given the critical job of shopping for food.

In Guild's Lake Courts, parents would often send their children to one of the PBR Food Centers with a coin for a single item. Older children were trusted to make

more extensive purchases with the family's ration cards. But the PBR Food Centers were not just a place to make purchases; it was also a place for residents to mingle. Figure 7-1 shows a wooden phone booth, next to a bicycle on the right side, in which it appears that someone is placing a call. Since none of the dwelling units had phone service, any place with a phone booth was a mini-community information hub. Only the interviewees who were then teenagers old enough to date recalled using these phones.

Darlene Hurd, who lived with her siblings at 3160 NW Wake Place for two and a half years, recalled that one of her responsibilities was to make frequent trips to the PBR store. She recalls vividly the proximity of her unit to playmates and cottonwoods. Her fondest memories of the project involve playing with her younger sister and her three male cousins, as well as a little neighbor girl named Charlene. These shopping trips became the experiential backbone for one of her favorite role-playing games with her little sister, a game in which Darlene played storekeeper, using empty food containers (boxes) as props.

Darlene was not the only child to make frequent trips to the PBR store. Donald Lauinger also recalled running errands to one of the PBR stores in Guild's Lake Courts, "because I remember going to the store and buying bread, eight cents for a small loaf and ten cents for a large loaf."⁶ Bread was one of the items that did not require using a ration card and stamps. Donald recalled that for eggs, butter, or "anything major, Mom or Dad bought that. But if we were out of bread, she'd give me a dime, and I'd run down to the store and buy a loaf."⁷

As he spoke about rationing, Ronald Pedersen explained what was stocked at the local PBR Food Centers and why children were often called upon to do the shopping, typically for food:

There was rationing, yeah. I remember going to the little grocery store at Guild's Lake [Courts]. It was part of the complex, plus it was only open during the days, probably during 9:00AM–4:00PM. And my mother couldn't get off at that time. So she asked me to do the shopping with the little ration book that you could take out. Every once in a while I get ration coins that people had saved since World War II. You know it was on meats, butters, even fruits and stuff like that. Cigarettes, cigarettes weren't even on sale. If you wanted cigarettes, you had to kind of keep your eyes peeled on newspapers that advertised that, "we're going to have cigarettes, from 3 o'clock to 5 o'clock tomorrow." Because cigarettes went to the guys who were overseas. I remember one time looking in my uncle's cupboard, that's where he kept his cigarettes—I was looking for something else—that's where they kept their cigarettes; my aunt smoked, too. And there might have been eight or ten different brands of cigarettes. Just because you could not go and get your own brand at that point. You had to take whatever was available. So the disposable income was there, but there were not things to spend it on [besides] movies.⁸

There is no record that the residents of Guild's Lake Courts ever sought expanded shopping hours at the PBR Food Centers, probably because they had access to nearby NW 23rd Avenue where there were many retail shops. A few interviewees recalled buying cigarettes for their parents or for trading; it was not until 1950 that all states had placed age restrictions on their purchase of cigarettes, although machines continued to sell the product to children for decades.⁹ While residents in Vancouver's isolated defense housing projects were able to negotiate for expanded hours one day a week to meet the needs of working mothers, the short hours of operation at the PBR Food Centers in Guild's Lake Courts were never adjusted.

Montgomery Ward and Other Retail Stores

The largest off-site retail establishment near Guild's Lake Courts was the Montgomery Ward department store abutting the development. Four blocks away from NW 23rd Avenue, the Ward's structure was built in 1920 as a regional distribution center with at least two floors dedicated to retail sales; it had 78,000 square feet of usable space.¹⁰ Fondly called "Monkey Ward's" by many interviewees (although some have used this nickname derisively), it was the most obvious source for many non-food items. One resident, Bob Hilger, felt fortunate that his household included an uncle who worked at Ward's and an aunt who worked at Meier and Frank; he recalled how the family saved money through their employee discounts.

Figure 7-2 shows this nine-story edifice towering over the all the other structures in the Guild's Lake District. In the upper left of the photograph, one can see the electric units on their horseshoe-shaped courtyards and some of the other dwellings in Guild's Lake Courts. On the left, in front of Montgomery Ward's, stands the massive log cabin called the Forestry Building, a remnant of the 1905 Lewis & Clark Exposition.

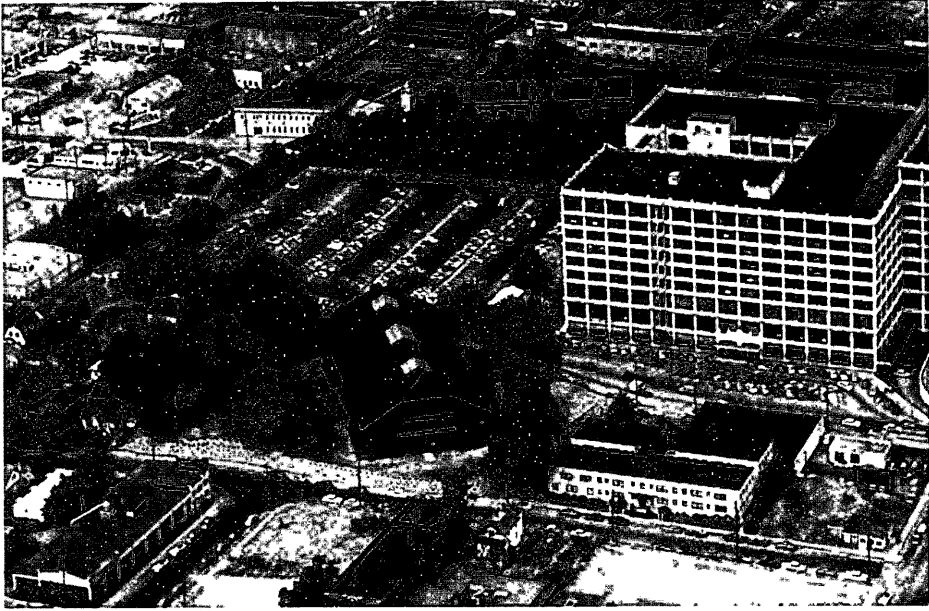


Figure 7-2. (photo cropped) Aerial photo of district showing Forestry Building and Montgomery Ward's department store. Courtesy of the City of Portland Archives.

Some of the children were old enough to run errands or spend their own money off site. William Hillgaertner was almost a teenager and was allowed to go shopping downtown. He enjoyed taking the streetcar to "The Big City," where he was able to check out the Meier and Frank department store.¹¹

Movies and Restaurants

With wartime rationing and the desire to save money for war stamps, tickets for a show at a movie theater and an occasional meal out were the only luxuries that children of Guild's Lake Courts were willing to spend their money on. Families went to a restaurant infrequently, usually on Sunday. There were a few restaurants close to Montgomery Ward's for whites to patronize. Even though no signs were posted in the

windows, African American knew they were not welcome in many of the local restaurants and retail establishments. For the children of Guild's Lake Courts, there were plenty of local movie houses and inexpensive restaurants, and these became an important source of entertainment.

Donald Lauinger echoed Darlene Hurd's reflections about families being thrifty:

There was not a whole lot of money to be had; I mean, our [family's] entertainment was to go to the movie theater right there by Ward's.... The big entertainment for us was there was this Quonset hut Chinese restaurant right there by Ward's. And we ate a lot there, then we would go to the Elmo Theater [on the corner of NW 24th and Thurman], which was a block or two away, and that was close to Guild's Lake. We'd go have Chinese food on Friday nights and then go to the movies, and that was basically the entertainment—movie theaters, ...there was nothing else.¹²

There was a restaurant in the Quonset hut on the southeast corner of 27th and Upsure but Mike Ryerson recalls that the restaurant "South China" was in another structure on the northeast corner of the same intersection.¹³ Ronald Pedersen recalled typical movie theater outings, children often attended movies without adult chaperones:

[T]he closest theater to Guild's Lake was the Elmo Theater, about a two-mile walk, and downtown Portland three to five miles. It came down Upshur Street from a block from where the baseball park [was]. Those streets are alphabetical from Burnside on down. So Vaughn, and then it was the street with the "U," and it was the Elmo Theater, and they always had double features. But that was closest. You did a lot of walking in those days. On Sunday I got paid for my job with the newspapers, 50–70 cents a week. And there was a theater in downtown Portland on Washington, down by Washington and Broadway, that had movies starting at 10 o'clock. [It was] called the Blue Mouse; you could see two movies there with all the things that come with it. Go down to theater row, which is on Broadway, there was the Paramount, the Mayfair, the Broadway—there were a couple of others, the Liberty and the United Artists—and see two more movies, ten cents each. And then if you went down two or three more blocks to the

Capital, that had two movies and a vaudeville show, another ten cents. And ten cents for the trolley going home, and ten cents for the trolley going out, you had fifty cents at best. If you wanted to buy a candy bar or something to eat, there was nice little place called The Original Coney Island Dog, on Washington Street by the Blue Mouse, where you could buy a hotdog or something. But if you spent that dime [and] you only had fifty cents...you walked all the way back home.¹⁴

Movie theaters were not just places to be passively entertained with images of fantasy. They also offered newsreels, which were a critical way for the children to stay informed about the war and other current events. Newsreels would supply images for the details of the war that children learned nightly from the family's radio.

Forestry Building

This was more than a building to admire from the outside—it was a museum to explore. Many residents of Guild's Lake Courts learned details about the past grandeur of their neighborhood and their adopted city. The Forestry Center was free and had one staff person on site. On a hot day young residents were drawn to the structure's cool interior. Dale Lee Butler talked about how he used to enjoy going to crawl around the Battleship Oregon for a dime and that the other museum he enjoyed as a child was the Forestry Building, which absorbed many of the mariner exhibits after the battleship was scrapped:

They had exhibits that were later moved to the Forestry Center. The Forestry Center that burned down [in 1964]. There were a lot of things that had been on the Battleship Oregon that were moved to the Forestry Center. And that was another place we used to play, because you could go and spend all day in there. You couldn't go to the upper balconies and things, because they were unsafe. They had just dried out so much for years so they had them all blocked off. But as far as the main floor went you could go [free] on a hot day.... [Y]ou went in the Forestry Center and it was probably 10–15 degrees cooler than it was outside.¹⁵

Ronald Pedersen brings up the issue of his family's economics when asked about the cost and access to the Forestry Building, the only remaining Lewis & Clark Exposition structure in the community:

Oh, can't remember, by today's standards [the Forestry Center] wasn't much, but by those standards it was quite the thing. Kids didn't get to see museums; living in Guild's Lake [Courts], it just wasn't part of the agenda. The only time people at Guild's Lake [Courts] had time to spend on somewhat frivolous things was during World War II when both mom and dad were working in the shipyards. However, they didn't have any place to spend their money in those days because they weren't making automobiles, weren't making tires, and [you] couldn't get gas for your car. So the disposable income was there, but there wasn't anything [to buy]. It was the only time I ever saw my stepdad save money.¹⁶

A number of the residents recalled that there were quite odd exhibits, like a series of miniature historic torture devices all made out of wood. They expressed a sense of sadness about the loss of the Forestry Building, one of the last structures to trigger place-memory that had outlasted the defense housing.

War-Related Activities

Children's thoughts were often on the war. Collecting scrap metal and newspapers, as well as planting and maintaining Victory Gardens, were ways children could help the United States win the war. Another way was to purchase War Savings Stamps (also called "war stamps" or "victory stamps"). Schoolchildren became very competitive over collecting these stamps. At Guilds Lake School, stamps were sold every Tuesday, sales for the 1944-45 school year that Spring had already reached \$2,188.10.¹⁷ Each week the classroom that sold the most stamps per pupil within the

classroom was given the banner to display for a week.¹⁸ Donald Lauinger, for example, was swept up in the war stamp–purchasing craze. He recalled with humor that he was initially oblivious that the stamps were an asset to be saved—in effect a zero-interest loan to the federal government that could be converted back into money after the war:

We'd buy a stamp. And so that five cents or ten cents would buy that in the book. I do not know what the value of the book was, but we put five and ten cent stamps in the book; rather than buying War Bonds, we bought war stamps. And at one time I had about forty-five cents; well I don't know how I got it, but I remember to this day I took that full forty-five cents—or thirty-five, a large amount of money—bought all of them stamps, and I was a hero. Didn't know what to do [with them], so I went out and glued them alongside the building. I bought stamps and I just licked them and stuck them against the outside of...the school building.¹⁹

The competition to buy war stamps could be intense; they made children feel like heroes. The National Recreation Association²⁰ was concerned in 1943 about the impacts of wartime activities on the emotional well-being of youth. It feared over-stimulation, pressure to participate, competitive elements, and exploitation of children by adults when participating in collecting paper, tinfoil, and scrap metal; purchasing defense stamps; making airplanes; or joining the Junior Red Cross or other newly created clubs focusing on assisting in the war effort.²¹ Beverly Meskel, who attended the Guild's Lake Courts reunion in 2009, had a poem “Save War Bonds” published in the quarterly school paper:

Save a penny, Jimmy,
Save a penny, Sue,
Spend it on a war stamp,
It will take care of you!²²

One childhood expert, Stan Cohen states that “youngsters do not have the experience of life common to adults, and while their mothers and fathers knew a lot of the news was a product of wishful thinking, the children accepted every shred of grandiose Allied propaganda as if it were absolutely true and not even subject to question.”²³ Children of poor families would feel ostracized because they lacked money for war stamps, and others feared forgetting to bring their money to school lest they would be seen to be letting slip “some cog in the war machine.”²⁴ War stamps sales and paper drives continued at Guilds Lake School even after the war, what had once helped buy ammunition, planes and tanks could now “buy freedom.”²⁵ Historian William Tuttle too reflects on the seriousness children placed on war-related activities:

During the war schoolchildren collected extraordinary amounts of waste paper, bacon grease, and scrap metals, and they sold War Bonds and Victory Stamps worth hundreds of millions of dollars. But what is important is not the aggregated figures, but rather the individual enthusiasm and dedication that produced these tools.... They were not merely volunteering a wagonload of newspapers or a wheelbarrow full of tin cans; the flattened cans, for example, were the raw materials for manufacturing airplanes, ships, and tanks. And they were purchasing War Bonds and Victory Stamps not as investments for the future, but to win the war then and there by raising money to build more weapons.²⁶

After the war ended, war stamps continued to be sold at Guild’s Lake School.

Children were still being encouraged to purchase stamps and bonds in the *Guild’s*

Lake School Paper:

Stamps and bonds are being sold throughout the school on the second Wednesday of every month. The sales will begin the ninth of April and will continue until the last of school. Bonds were bought all through the war for guns, tanks, and ammunition to help fight. Now the war is over, but there is still a great need for buying

them. The boys who fought are coming home to live and we must help them get readjusted. The money that during the war went for war equipment will now go for houses, food, and clothing for our own people and for the starving people abroad. So please remember, keep buying them. All the casualties of war are not over yet.

—Reita Brown, Room 17, 8th grade²⁷

Playgrounds

Playgrounds and sports areas in defense housing communities were limited, due to their low priority during wartime and the perception of the developers that these communities were temporary. A HAP document reported that the residents of Guild's Lake Courts had sufficient access to the recreation facilities of nearby city parks, thus on-site development was limited to "small playgrounds at the rear of the dwellings."²⁸ The equipment was inadequate to suit even the needs of the children enrolled in the daycare centers. Contemporary aerial photographs show that the only built features consisted of a couple sets of monkey bars and a swing set adjacent to a community center building. These areas were magnets for children to use during their extensive amounts of unstructured free time; it was easier—and possibly more pleasant—for older children to find less utilized play areas, even if they were not constructed or designed for play. Although it was not unusual for playgrounds and parks to be supervised by paid staff in this era, no record of any staffing of playgrounds at Guild's Lake Courts has come to light. As quasi-supervised spaces children perceived the playgrounds as extensions of the community centers. Only a few interviewees

mentioned any formal play structures, despite being prompted for details. Janice Bell recalled an unusual sight from her vantage point atop the monkey bars:

I was playing out in the back where we were on the monkey bars and I looked over and I saw this pony and I ran over there to see what was going on. It was clear on the other side of this open area and they were taking pictures [of children with the pony] and I just knew I had to have this. I ran back home and Mom didn't really have the money. She had the money, but she didn't think she should use it on that, but she gave in. And so she took me over there and she paid to have my picture taken and then I got it. You know, they sent it. She has it somewhere. But I had the biggest grin on my face. I guess all kids do, you know. I can still remember that.²⁹

Using metal for monkey bars would have wasted a precious commodity; in a few of the images it is clear that structures were made of wood.

The amount and quality of play features at Guild's Lake Courts, based on case studies available, were inferior to other large-scale defense developments in the region. For example, Vancouver's housing authority even had a wading pool installed at one development that attracted and cooled off "20,000 kids during World War II."³⁰ Wading pools had been a popular type of children's equipment in public housing developments before the war. Since Portland had cooler summers than New York and Chicago, it is not surprising that the only evidence of a wading pool was at a housing development in Vancouver. Besides, Guild's Lake Courts was close to the Willamette River and the slough, and the children were not afraid to wade in those waters.

In general the play features at Guild's Lake Courts were unremarkable and unmemorable. Only two images found during this research show children using these play elements: One photo shows a wooden monkey bar-ladder system and a plank of wood being used as a balance beam/bouncy board (see Figure 7-4); another shows

children playing on the jungle gym at the Gona Street Community Center (see Figure 7-3).



Figure 7-3. (photo-cropped) Children on jungle gym at a community center at Guild's Lake Courts, 1944 (close up of Figure 6-1). Courtesy of the City of Portland Archives, A2001-025.221.



Figure 7-4. (photo) Children on climbing structure at Gona Street Community Center in Guild's Lake Courts, c. 1948. Courtesy of Gloria (Cash) Campbell.

The monkey bars in Figure 7-3 and were also used in East River Houses in New York City and in housing projects in Vancouver, Washington, so they must have been the standard design for 1940s era federal housing units.

Structured Volunteer Activities

Older children were less interested in free play, and many sought out civic-minded activities that would enhance the community-volunteer activities that required a certain amount of growth and maturity. A feeling of responsibility toward their community permeated the lives of young adults. The responsibilities thrust upon these young volunteers came about because the adults in the community were serving abroad or working long days, opening up opportunities for teenagers to fulfill adult roles to protect their communities and assist the war effort. These young people volunteered as firefighters, safety patrol officers, and crossing guards. At Guild's Lake Courts the two main organizations were the Junior Fire Brigades and the Junior Patrol. Unfortunately, this research uncovered no records that state the official years of operation for either volunteer organization or their membership lists.

Junior Fire Brigade

Firefighting was a critical function in Guild's Lake Courts. The project's wooden homes were tinderboxes; they had been built hastily without any firewalls, and a single ember could create a catastrophe for the occupants. Many units had been

built adjacent to fire-prone industrial facilities, such as lumberyards, a foundry, a roofing company, petroleum tanks, an active city dump with open burning, and railcars carrying timber and liquid asphalt. Not a single one of these commercial industrial facilities were compatible with residential usage, yet a community of 10,000 residents was sited right next to these hazards without the construction of fire barriers. During this research, many residents shared stories of their own homes at the development having a close shave with a large industrial fires, making it clear that many areas of Guild's Lake Courts were quite unsuitable for housing.

The incineration system at the Guild's Lake-Slabtown dump site was inoperable from October 1942 on, at which point the City authorized open trash burning at the site, increasing the fire hazards for residents of adjacent housing units. This city dump was located at the foot of NW 25th Place and, along with surrounding industrial sites, was one of the many high-risk fire hazards for residents of Guild's Lake Courts. On July 8, 1945, *The Oregonian* ran a story about the need to discontinue the practice of open burning, including the details of three fires along NW 25th Avenue and NW 25th Place, where embers from trash fires had set houses ablaze (see Figure 7-5).



Figure 7-5 (photo) The active city dump at NW 25th Place. Courtesy of the City of Portland Archives, newspaper clipping from HAP scrapbook.

To increase access to fire abatement tools, a fire station was built using federal funds (by 1943 were there two stations, one abandoned on St. Helen's Road that still stands and a temporary one in the community center that was demolished) behind the 35th Street Community Center, and youth from the community were divided into three geographic teams and trained there to be volunteer firefighters. Communities across the city had to bolster the staff of their fire departments with volunteer firefighters to address staffing shortages.



Figure 7-6. (photo) Young African American men from Guild's Lake Courts practicing with a fire hose at University Park. This text was written on the back of the photograph: "These negro lads at Guild's Lake show how to direct a stream of water."

It was years before the Portland Fire Department allowed African Americans to become firefighters. In front, left to right, are James Peterson and James McDowell. In rear, are James Green (in hat) and Captain James Neal. Charles Neal is the watchful lad in the background. There are three such groups at Guild's Lake. October 8, 1944. Courtesy of the City of Portland Archives.

One of the volunteers went on to greater fame and fortune. Charles Neal became a nationally known baseball player, playing second base for the Los Angeles Dodgers during the 1959 World Series. Like many male interviewees, Ronald Pedersen recognized Charles Neal from the photograph, a copy of which was brought to each interview:

Charles Neal. Nicknamed Charlie Neal, [he] played second base for the Brooklyn Dodgers. And then [he] also went to Los Angeles when they moved to Los Angeles and played there for a number of years. And then when the major league officials expanded the baseball team, he went back to the New York Mets. He could really hit that ball.³¹

Chuck Charnquist was there the day that photo was taken and had this to say about the fire brigades:

Of course, this was also wartime so Civil Defense organizations of all kinds were in place. One of the Civil Defense units was a “junior fire brigade” made up of sixth, seventh, and eighth grade boys in the project. We were actually trained to fight fires. We drilled two nights a week under the captain of the project’s fire station. We learned how to run out two-inch fire hoses using [the] station’s olive-drab Civil Defense fire engine; how to attach it to a fire hydrant, hold the hose and direct the stream of water; how to climb ladders and how to enter burning rooms. We even went through a daylong series of accreditation tests with junior brigades from other housing projects around the city conducted by the Portland Fire Department. It made a bunch of pre-teens feel pretty important.³²

Charnquist recalls two large fires that required areas of the development to be evacuated, in which he and his fellow brigade members positioned themselves to support the efforts made by Coast Guard and Portland firefighters. Bob Hilger, who lived at 3735 NW Guam Street, recalled that the proximity of housing to dangerous enterprises made fire a pressing concern of most residents:

The biggest fire that I remember, I do not think that it caught any housing units, but it was the scariest thing. We all went over to see. It was a big roofing company—and I was thinking that it was [in] Guild’s Lake, but I’m not sure—but it was a large roofing company that had caught fire, and people were just running in panic. We went over there to see what was going on. People were trying to get away from their homes, getting their stuff together, and I do not know what started it.³³

Junior Patrol

While the threat of fire was a pervasive concern for many residents, juvenile delinquency was also a concern for HAP staff and public school officials. The Junior

Patrols came out of the volunteer arm of the Police Department known as the Sunshine Division. It was not until 1942 that police had been expected to volunteer to work security at ballgames; the unionization was causing some changes within the organization.³⁴ From 1942 to 1948 staffing was a huge issue for the police force, for the Civil Service Exams had not been implemented and there was no overtime pay for officers.³⁵ Historians Richard Engeman and Kathy Tucker's students write that in response, the local police formed the Junior Patrol, a group of young men who were trained to help fight juvenile delinquency and defacement in the area:

There was so much trouble and vandalism in the area that some of the local policemen befriended local youth and started a Junior Patrol unit. Officers E. R. West and Kenneth Leisig trained boys to help fight vandalism. The Junior Patrol was formally organized on December 1, 1946, and had only six members but quickly grew to over ninety boys, between eight and fifteen years old. The officers used the recreational center to hold their meetings. The enthusiasm of the youths who took part in this operation made it necessary for the group to have two meetings on Sundays. The reported purpose of the patrol was not to create a group of "squealers" but rather to instill some pride in the children of the area.³⁶

The Junior Patrol at Guild's Lake Courts had sixty-five members in 1946. It was considered "instrumental in holding down juvenile delinquency in their neighborhood," but just how and when they operated is uncertain. On December 26, 1946, Police Patrolman Kenneth Leisey organized an appreciation luncheon for members of the Junior Patrol, during which the highlight for the youth was rides in a "Black Maria to and from Guild's Lake [Courts]." Black Maria is a slang term that has fallen out of use; it references the black-painted police patrol wagon, also known by another ethnic pejorative still in use: the "paddy wagon." This post-Christmas party

took place at the downtown police station, and was sponsored by the Portland Police Sunshine Division.³⁷ Figure 7-7 is a photo of the party showing that the membership of the Junior Patrol was racially integrated.



Figure 7-7. (photo) Guild's Lake Courts Junior Patrol celebrating the Christmas holiday in 1946 at the Portland Police Station with the Sunshine Division. *The Oregonian*, December 27, 1946. Courtesy of the City of Portland Archives, HAP scrapbook.

At this party the kids enjoyed cookies freshly baked by jail chef Fred Klaesi and served up with a cup of ice cream. In Figure 7-7, Portland Police Bureau Chief Leon V. Jenkins stands behind eight-year-old Larry Hall and five-year-old Travis Campbell, younger boys who were just honorary members. None of the individuals who contributed to this research project were members of the Junior Patrol. Not surprisingly, however the individuals who contributed to this research project display the very type of pride for the Guild's Lake Courts community that this Junior Patrol program was trying to instill.

Community Cleanups/Scrap Collection

Another structured volunteer activity for the children was organized around cleaning up the community and gathering scrap materials for use in the war effort (see Figure 7-8).



Figure 7-8. (photo) Children in Guild's Lake Courts participating in a cleanup week, July 28–August 5, 1944. In pencil on the back of image: "Miss Billie Elliot, director of recreation at the 35th Ave. Community Bldg. 3500 NW 35th Ave." Photo by Leonard Delano. Courtesy City of Portland Archives.

These tasks were made more pleasant by adding a bit of fun to the job. In this photograph, note that someone has painted a face and tied a bow on one of the brooms, and many of the little girls are wearing paper hats. Many of the children have taken off their shoes and shirts, and the sun is strong enough that the children are not looking straight at the camera. Even in this posed shot, some children in the background are still actively collecting trash.

Unintended Play Activities

A number of unmonitored and unintended play activities transpired in the community. There is no end to what a child can discover and manipulate for entertainment. Children are able to use their imaginations and restructure space to create “playgrounds” almost anywhere. In Guild’s Lake Courts, some of these playgrounds were created from non-play elements in the landscape such as coal bins, drainage systems, and junkyards; others were consumer services such as ice and newspaper deliveries that brought joy to the children. This plenitude of freedom only explains in part the non-urban behavior of the children; the housing for families in Guild’s Lake Courts was removed from the ills of city life to such a degree that parents were unafraid of their children’s desire for adventure—for example, by exploring underground drainage pipes or digging through trash at the dump. Perhaps many families retained cultural values from rural America when it came to expectations for their children’s recreational pastimes.

Coal Bins

Children did not have to go far from their homes to find hidden play spaces: coal bins, wooden boxes adjacent to each household, served this purpose. In Figure 7-9, professional photographer Leonard Delano has posed two women next to a coal bin.

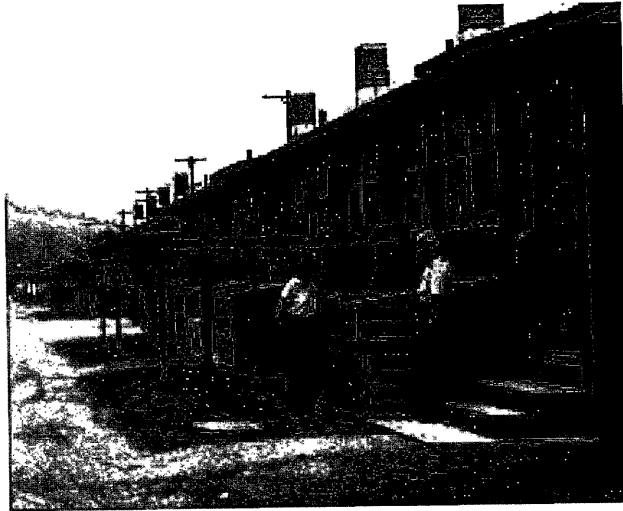


Figure 7-9. (photo cropped) Women standing by a coal bin on NW 41st Court in Guild's Lake Courts, 1944. These coal boxes were used by some children as a sort of clubhouse/hideaway. Courtesy of the City of Portland Archives.

This 1944 image looks down NW 41st Court, a street lined with row houses and two-story units. The left side also shows electrical wires, on the same sightline as the chimneys. There is a hinged lid on the top of the bin, as well as a side door with a slip-rod phasing system. The bin appears to be approximately three feet in all directions, making it a serviceable play area. There was little chance that the coal would ignite while children were playing in the bins.

In this photo, the address tiles are clear above the doorway on the unit closest on the left and the label for the image in the back of the photograph is 41417 NW 41st Court, denoting perhaps the unit number associated with the coal bin where the women are standing. What is puzzling about this image is that these women are white and these row houses are from the African American area of Guild's Lake Courts. This unusual juxtaposition leads to two possible interpretations: 1) perhaps only the

units on the west side of NW Kittredge Avenue were exclusively African American, the area of the minority community of Guild's Lake Courts across the street from the grade school, or 2) these women were models hired or used for the photograph, and the photographer was unaware of the segregation.

A number of interviewees recalled spending hours playing in these coal bins, using them as a sort of secret clubhouse. Janice Bell used the coal bin outside her home like a playpen; she recalled it as a neat place to play with toy cars. "I'd be black most of the time, 'cause it was just a neat place to play."³⁸ Edith Bunch would come home to cook dinner for her two children and always thought it odd that children would occasionally sit on top of the coal bin shown in Figure 7-10 to watch her family dine.



Figure 7-10. (photo) The Prettitts moved into Guild's Lake Courts after the war. The coal box in this image is just behind Julie, where her playmates stood to watch her family eat dinner. Courtesy of Edith (Pettitt) Bunch.

In the photograph is her daughter, Jeanne Pettitt, holding her favorite composition doll.³⁹ To the left of the coal bin is a pile of kindling wood used to start the coal stove.

Dumpsites

The get-your-hands-dirty play did not end at the coal bins. While some residents complained of the obnoxious piles of trash adjacent to their new homes, other residents, undeterred by the risks, willingly entered the junkyards to scrap-pick through the heaps. According to Dale Butler, one pile of trash was about twenty feet deep, and he was lucky that the wind tended to blow away from his home: "It just like smoldered all of the time. From the ground level to the top where they planed it off...where they dozed it all flat."⁴⁰

Children were willing to get into the real muck of debris at the local dumpsite. The dumpsite provided a great source for imaginative play, including shooting practice for children who owned guns. Interviewees often failed to recall the smell of burning eggshells and rubber, but remembered extracting everything from prized treasures to jars for canning. Janice Bell's mother wouldn't give her permission to go to the dump, but that didn't always deter her:

She'd go in there and get the kindling, and get empty jars, mayonnaise jars and coffee, coffee used to come in jars, and she used that for canning, but she wouldn't let me go and I had to stay home with my brother, and then the neighbor would kind of keep an eye on things. However, I did go to the dump when I wasn't supposed to, as most kids do, but she didn't [approve]; she was afraid the rats would either get me, or the Gypsies.⁴¹

Another child sought out any sort of military paraphernalia he and his friends could find in the dump. Young Dale Butler had trespassed with his friends at another local dumpsite that had been used by the military. The boys regularly trolled the site looking for treasure and playing war games on the wreckage of an old fighter plane.

[We collected] helmets...anything we could get our hands on. We used to go to this dump...that was no longer being used.... [W]e'd go over there and scrounge gas masks and <>. On top of that, on top of the incinerator of Schnitzer Steel, which of course is still there...was just a big junkyard then. But they had a piece of a big fighter [airplane] there, with the wings off. But everything else [was still there], the control surfaces and stuff, and you could get into the cockpit. We used to drive the watchman nuts because he used to spend half his time running us out of there. Because all we wanted to do was to play in that airplane! And we did. Quite a bit.⁴²

Some children hunted rats in the dump, killing them with small rifles. Real rifles and toy versions were popular toys for children living in a time when war was a daily topic and the reason for their living in defense housing.



Figure 7-11. (photo) A young William Hillgaertner with his toy shotgun, in front of their home at Guild's Lake Courts. Courtesy of William Wier Hillgaertner.

Drainage Pipes

If playing in the dump were not enough of a diversion, there were always the drainage pipes. Bob Hilger uses the term “sewers,” though it is likely that these were actually the pipes the Army Corps of Engineers had installed for drainage when the swamplands were filled in a decade earlier. Either way, the pipes were not intended to be play sites, but, as with many places discussed in this chapter, children used them in a creative adaptation to their surroundings. Children can healthfully develop socially, cognitively, and emotionally in a number of environments.

Bob Hilger: This is terrible—we could go down in the sewers.

Tanya March: You went down in the sewers?

Bob Hilger: Yeah, there was, they were long tunnels. There wasn't any sewerage in there; I do not know why they were dry. You could go quite a ways; they were all underneath.

Tanya March: Underneath the housing?

Bob Hilger: Yeah.

Tanya March: There is an underground city going on there?

Bob Hilger: Yeah, there's an underground city.⁴³

From playing in junkyards to exploring drainage pipes, it is clear that Guild's Lake Courts' children were allowed to get messy. Not all activities were this startling, although most of the activities these residents remembered allowed them to be resourceful, inventive, and creative.

Ice Deliveries

In addition to coal deliveries, all the non-electric units received deliveries of ice. Ice trucks drove through the housing project more often than coal trucks, because the ice had a short shelf life. On hot days children chased the ice truck, asking for

chunks of ice to suck on. The ice was a real treat for these children and one of the cleaner “toys” available. Gloria Cash recalled that the iceman went to her church. When he came to their back door at Guild’s Lake Courts, “I used to come and say, ‘My mother wants twenty-five pounds of ice.’”⁴⁴ Donald Lauinger recalled:

Well nobody had refrigerators back then, everybody had iceboxes. And the ice truck would come through twice a week. But all the kids would follow the ice truck, because when the iceman took his twenty-five- or fifty-pound block of ice into the house, we would all hang onto the back of the ice truck, because there were always hunks and chunks of ice. But that was a real treat to grab those big blocks of ice, chew them, play on them. We would get big hunks of ice. I mean, that was always fun.⁴⁵

Balance of Wilderness and Urban Life

Swimming in the River

Ice was not the only way to keep cool in summer. The swimming pools were far away (and African American children were excluded from them), so the children headed up into the hills and down to the river. Despite the fact that downtown was easily accessible on foot, most residents interviewed oriented themselves to Ward’s, the vast natural resources surrounding Guild’s Lake Courts, from the Willamette River to the peaks of Forest Park. Joe Kordic recalled digging caves into the hillside on St. Helen’s Road, right around the bend from Montgomery Ward’s. The hillside of Westover Terrace’s had been sluiced in order to fill Guild’s Lake, so the erosion and open scar on the land was quite an attractant for young explorers. Other interviewees recalled learning to swim and catching frogs in the slough. Another place to swim was always the river: Every generation knew the risks and every generation swam.

Arthur McLean, an older resident of Slabtown who was born in 1899, used to play baseball with the Slabtown Gang, carried newspapers for the *Journal* in this neighborhood from 1914 to 1916, and was able to ice skate on Guild's Lake before it was filled in.

It was a clear lake but we used to swim in the river. I used to swim right where I used to work.... We used to get out on a board and ride the stern wheelers that were moving traffic up and down the river, and they'd make great waves and we were out there and rode on those. And I think of it now, my God, I wouldn't have a kid of mine out there. Then we used to swim over to Swan Island.⁴⁶

It is interesting that McLean, who was old enough to be the father of most of the residents interviewed, reflected on his activities in the same manner as Guild's Lake Courts residents did in their interviews, saying that although they had engaged in much risky play in these wild areas, they would not want to let their children or grandchildren to do the same. McLean talks of the risk of being hit by a floating log from one of the mills operating in the area. Individuals were aware that the wartime industries—shipbuilding, lead processing, and the transfer and storage of petroleum products—account for much of the environmental damage that plagues the health of the river today:

Dale Butler: The river was very important to us kids. We swam in that filthy thing, and fished, and played.... Why our parents allowed it, I have no idea.... It's a wonder we didn't come down with any of a half a dozen diseases...but like all kids we seemed to be immune to anything that was really dangerous.... Let's see...Standard Oil was a pretty big deal because the Russian tankers would come in there. In fact, I told my wife at one time I had considered stowing away on a Russian tanker...and they had female crews...from the Captain through the Chief Engineer. And I thought I would stow away and end up in...but luckily I got over that idea. I must have been like nine or ten or

something.... Yeah, we lived at that river. God, there was a big old barge down there that had just rotted away and they had parked it on the bank. It must have been fifty or sixty feet long. Had holes in it that were full of water. It's a wonder one of us didn't fall in and drown. I damn near did. And a friend of mine who was with me was an older kid, and we were both hunting for carp...and fishing with a bow and arrow with a line on either arrow. And I started falling back.... I was standing on a plank about that wide...started falling backwards into one of those holes, and he just caught me by the arm and straightened me back up. And I [thought to myself] "I don't think I'm going to go out here anymore." (Laughing)

Tanya March: So, you're fishing in it...you're eating the fish...you're swimming in it.

Dale Butler: Yeah, we were doing everything.

Tanya March: They were dumping all the steel waste in the [river]?

Dale Butler: Well, that beach was just orange with iron. We did hunt some. Mainly ptarmigan and grouse...things like that. I had a friend upstairs, who had a .22 pistol. And he used to take it and go down to the docks. And I had been around firearms all my life. Anyway, one other thing we did.... There was a lot of truck traffic on Front Ave. that ran in front of the house. And out at the end...there was sand and dirt out there...and it was about twenty yards wide going out to the street. And we used to dig potholes out there...get cardboard and put dirt on it...cover up our hole. Then we would get a big supply of dirt clods, and when the trucks come by, and [then I would] jump out and throw them at the truck sides. Every so often the truckers would slam on the air and hop out and come running and try and catch us. We'd duck into our holes and pull our cardboard over us. And they'd walk...and we'd just disappeared! And that was our big gig for a while (laughing).⁴⁷

Sports and Intended Play Activities

War Games

Role-playing games that involved war themes were quite common for children of this era, and parents were not concerned about toy guns. A number of the children at Guild's Lake Courts played military dress-up type games. William Hillgaertner had a scrapbook image of himself dressed in a uniform and carrying a gun (see Figure 7-11), which was, according to him, a toy double-barreled shotgun. His dad built him the

gun, and it was very special to him. In Figure 7-12 William is posing, saluting the cameraman in military clothes; even Tommy Pettitt (who moved into Guild's Lake Courts after the war) has badges on his sleeves which might be of military nature or, like the insignia on William's shorts in Figure 7-11, they might be just all that was sold in the stores. Eldon Rose's scrapbook also had images of children in military dress (see figures 7-12, 7-13, 7-14)—since these types of images appeared in many sources and they typically were play clothes, not just Halloween apparel.



Figure 7-12. (photo) William saluting the cameraman, dressed in a military uniform. Courtesy of William Hillgaertner.



Figure 7-13. (photo) Tommy Pettitt with a scooter, wearing clothes resembling a military uniform. Courtesy of Edith (Pettitt) Bunch.



Figure 7-14. (photo) These two young boys pictured near an electric unit are dressed just like their relative serving in the war, also pictured in their family photo album, c. 1942. Courtesy of Eldon Rose.

Sports as participants and spectators

Residents who came from all over the United States to live in defense housing shared an interest in sports. Until 1958, when the Brooklyn Dodgers and the New York Giants moved west, baseball and other popular spectator sports remained regional; the Beavers gained many new fans as Portland grew. Sports brought the instant wartime community together, helped participants to stay fit, and allowed spectators a reprieve from thoughts of the war. The most popular sport was baseball, represented locally by the Portland Beavers, a Triple-A minor league team. There was also a professional hockey team, the Portland Rosebuds (who in 1916 became the first U.S. team to compete for a Stanley Cup).⁴⁸ Other professional hockey teams using the same rink in NW Portland were perhaps the Portland Oilers (1943–1944) or the Portland Tiremen (1943–1944). The Pacific Coast Hockey League grew after World War II and the local team in 1944 became the Portland Eagles.

Baseball

As in the U.S. in general, baseball was a key activity for boys in defense housing projects, both as exercise and entertainment.⁴⁹ The amount of information gathered regarding softball games played by residents of Guild's Lake Courts and statistics for the professional Beavers team members, who had a large fan base at Guild's Lake Courts, was overwhelming and too extensive to be detailed at length in this narrative. Children of the Guild's Lake District had a distinct advantage in being close to the Vaughn Street Ballpark where these games were played. If they were not

able to get into the park to watch a game, they might play stickball with their peers from all over the city. Even if children lacked commercial equipment, they could find a stick or a broken bat and mash some paper cups together to use as a ball.

Baseball was a such a priority in the community that on opening day of the baseball season, any child in a Portland public school with a note from a parent could skip classes and go watch the game. Fortunately, the first resident interviewed, Bob Hilger, alerted the interviewer to the significant role that baseball played in the collective experience:

Well [my] favorite Beavers team [players] were probably John O'Neil who played short stop, Marv Owen, he was the third baseman and manager, and Eddy Haskin [sic], he was the catcher, and Martin [sic] played second base, and Gully [Ted Gullic] played center field, so you knew all the locals, and Frank Shone whom they use to say carried a whiskey bottle in his back pocket.... [B]aseball was the thing out here, and probably our hero.⁵⁰

Limited funds did not prevent the avid young fans from attending games because there was access to free tickets to certain games thanks to Kilpatrick's Bread Company. The San Francisco-based bread company had a history of club memberships for children including "The Lone Ranger Kilpatrick's Bread Club" in the 1930s and Star Trek cards in the 1970s. Interestingly, many interviewees recalled that teachers would let them skip school to attend daytime games. The Knothole Club was open to all children presumably under the age of twelve that sent in their registration information to the address printed on the company's products. Dale Butler was a member with fond recollections:

Oh yeah, well we had knothole cards [which came with the purchase of a loaf of bread]. On Friday night...if you were a kid and you had your

knothole card, you could get into the bleachers free. And I'm pretty sure it was Friday nights...but in fact, Portland used to let the schools out on the first day of the season. The schools used to close for anyone that wanted to go to the baseball game, and tickets were available. So, we used to go to the Vaughn Street Park regularly.⁵¹

When they were not watching games, some young residents, like Bob Hilger, enjoyed playing team sports like softball. He saved many clippings, cut from the paper. from his team sports days, as well as a certificate that states, "Certificate of Award: Bureau of Parks and Public Recreation City of Portland, Oregon, U.S.A. This is to certify that Bobbie Hilger is a member of the Guild's Lake Softball Team which has won the city Championship for Intermediate softball 1945." He has also cherished and retained softball mementos from his years at St. Patrick's.



Figure 7-15. (Photo) Bobbie ready to play yet another sport, this time football, posing in front of the family home. Note the ladder-like trellis around the simple porch.
Courtesy of Bob Hilger.

Barrels of sand were strategically placed in the stadium for shoveling on fires that would erupt below the wooden bleachers from haplessly tossed cigarettes:

Oh, yeah, 1905 [when ballpark expanded] and one of the original owners was this old guy who did a lot of work in the timber logging industry, part plus sawmill. The bad part of it was that people smoked. And they dropped the cigarette butts down underneath where they were sitting. And there would be fires. And to get away from that, Rocky Benevento, who was the guy in charge of all the maintenance in the stadium, would have great big barrels with sand in them with shovels all the way around under the bleachers, and then if a fire started they ran over there, grabbed some sand and threw it on the fire. Probably one of the reasons they moved over to Multnomah Stadium, which is now PGE Park. But it was a great place.⁵²

Watching a baseball game was one way to suspend reality and forget about the war overseas. Sometimes, however, even baseball was interrupted by the news of the war:

Ronald Pedersen: I was at a baseball game, at Vaughn Street Ballpark.

They made the announcement, "Ladies and Gentleman, dad dad di da, we've dropped the bomb on Hiroshima...." World's largest bomb and there wasn't even a murmur across the crowd; what did we know from atomic bombs? We'd never heard of an atomic bomb, we'd saw the bombing throughout the newsreels, and things through World War II.

Tanya March: The firebombing.

Ronald Pedersen: Right, regular bombs, whether it was firebombs, whatever, we didn't know anything about it until the next day, when the newspaper headlines came out about the atomic bomb, and then two weeks later Nagasaki was bombed.⁵³

Swimming Pools

Parents often sheltered their children from harsh social realities by avoiding the topic of segregation within the housing projects, but no parent was able to avoid the

reality that African American children were not allowed to swim in pools with white children. Jantzen Beach Amusement Park (operated 1928–1970 on Hayden Island) was a popular hangout for African American youth from the region, many of whom came from defense housing projects in Portland and Vancouver.⁵⁴ For example, African American artist Isaac Shamsud-Din talked about race restrictions at the pool. He remembered not being allowed to swim in the large pool at the park because “it wasn’t open to the black boys and girls.”⁵⁵

One unprompted conversation regarding race, at the reunion in 2007, was unintentionally recorded by the videographer. In this conversation, what is particularly interesting is that the segregation at the *housing development* was not part of their recollection of a racial divide in Portland; what upset these African American men about their childhood experience with segregation was being excluded from the pools at Jantzen Beach Amusement Park:

Raymond Burell: The only thing I remember mostly about segregation during that time [the 1940s] was out at Jantzen Beach.

Lorenzo Thornton: Yeah. You couldn’t go in the swimming pool.

Raymond Burell: We would always be outside on the street looking in.

Lorenzo Thornton: The first black that ever swam in Jantzen Beach swimming pool was [Joe Vier (name partially unintelligible)]. The only reason was he had won a diving contest, so he could swim [there]...and that was the only reason. He was the first black that ever went in Jantzen Beach pool.

Raymond Burell: Well, I’ll be darned. That was a nice place to go, but that was the only bad part, was that, but I was surprised to know that, to know, like, my mother never said anything about segregation. We never heard it. In fact I didn’t even know what it was hardly.

Lorenzo Thornton: Like I said, in Vanport we lived, they lived in the middle. We lived, like, Cottonwood and then Guild’s Lake, like I said. I didn’t know there was any white folks in Guild’s Lake.⁵⁶

It was not until the passage of the Public Accommodations Act of 1953, long after the demise of Guild's Lake Courts, that African Americans were able to use privately owned facilities such hotels and the pools at Jantzen Beach and the public pools operated by Portland Parks and Recreation. The pool at Oaks Park had already been closed before the war years but African Americans were not permitted to use the roller rink at that amusement park until public accommodations laws were changed.

Ice Skating Rink

Before Guild's Lake was filled in during the 1930s to prepare the land for industrial development, residents of the Slabtown neighborhood had skated on it in wintertime. Once the area was filled in, the compacted clay and sand proved more useful for other games, and ice skating became an indoor activity. The rink in Northwest Portland was the only professional-sized rink in the city and was used by the professional hockey team at that time. Depending upon where they had migrated from, some children might have arrived in Portland with a pair of ice skates that still fit.

Ice-rink demand increased during the wartime population boom. On September 6, 1942, *The Oregon Journal* reported that the Portland Ice Arena (this venue on NW 21st Avenue and Marshall Street was referred to in print as "the Portland Ice Arena" and as "The Coliseum") would open its doors for public use a month earlier than in a typical pre-war year and its hours of operation were subsequently extended to meet the needs of the war workers. Three public shifts were added to meet the increased

demands for ice time: 10:30AM–12:30PM, 3:00–5:00PM and 8:15–10:30PM. The proprietors were also hoping to add more public access with an open skate session from 10:30PM–12:30AM if there was enough demand. Headlines like “Ice Arena Opens Monday Night for Skaters” certainly alerted newcomers to the existence of the facility. Another report highlighted how ice hockey players from grade schools in the area were given ice time from 9:00–10:00AM, and 200 kids had skated during the prior week.⁵⁷ Since there was as yet no grade school at Guild’s Lake Courts, these youngsters would have come from Chapman and Couch grade schools during their school day.

Football

The following story about an interracial pick-up game fully describes football in the project:

Ronald Pedersen: You know, I’m going to tell you this story. This is a thing that has stuck back in my mind forever and ever. I wanted to write a story about it myself. One of my best friends, as I’d indicated before, was Lester Johnson, a black kid. Lester and I dreamed up that we would get a group of young black men from the integrated area to come up to play the white guys in a football game. Okay. Now one of these spots here—just before St. Helen’s Road here, [by] Montgomery Ward’s—there was a hard area in here that wasn’t all sand. It was an area where Guild’s Lake had receded, and it started to get a little hard. It was sand, but it was kind of a hard area.

Tanya: Like packed dirt.

Ronald Pedersen: Yeah, that’s it; we thought we’d get the guys up there to play football and we’d play, too. It grew like Topsy. It was a Sunday afternoon, and it grew, football players came from everywhere. And they were not kids like me, in the eighth grade or seventh grade. They weren’t freshmen; they were great big strapping young adults. Anywhere from 16 to 25 [years old]. And they came rolling in there

from the segregated areas. The black guys did; and some of the younger guys my age that had thought they were going to play on the football team scene; these guys, they took off and got their bigger brothers and their aunts and their uncles. It was like, it got to the point—I'm going to get to the political part pretty soon. People were just ringing around this area here, it got crowded. And then people started climbing up on top of these apartments. These are two-story apartments, okay? The game went on until dark easily. They had to quit because they couldn't see anything. And I thought, There's going to be a riot after this game. But after the game I was surprised; what did I know, I was a naïve kid, twelve years old. It was like they were all long-lost buddies. They put their arms around each other; they just played themselves into complete exhaustion, they were bruised and bloody. No football uniforms, no helmets, tackle football on solid hard ground. Okay, and it was like it was one of the greatest things I ever saw after that game, because they were all friends. Now if those people, in the black as well as the white part if it, had lasted on up to where kids were of high school age, they would have gone to Lincoln High School, up here; but it broke up and the ones that stayed moved over to the Jefferson High School area. Off the Interstate area, because that's where all the black people ended up, in the main, and also that's where the Vanport people ended up staying.

Conclusion



Figure 7-16. (photo). Little Miss Cooking Club, Guild's Lake Courts. NW Guam Street Community Center. Courtesy of Alice Hagen.

The activities of children at Guild's Lake Courts were certainly not stifled by extensive health and safety concerns. These resourceful children found unfettered locations to supplement their structured play and volunteer time. Because they had a considerable amount of freedom, these children were exposed to a wide range of dangers and learned self-protection.

Parents at Guild's Lake Courts tolerated their children getting messy from exploring boundaries and engaging in types of play that, although questionable by today's parental standards, enabled these youths to gain noteworthy skills in conflict resolution, moral conduct, self-respect, and responsibility. Janice Bell, who was only five years old when she lived at Guild's Lake Courts,⁵⁸ had vivid and fond memories of her childhood there:

Well, you know, as a child it was just great. I look back at that time, and it was—I can't say anything bad about it. I had so much fun. Um, just go outside and just play. You know, there's all sorts of kids around, and ... there wasn't a worry as long as I didn't do what I wasn't supposed to do; then I'd get in a little trouble.⁵⁹

Ronald Pedersen's memory of an integrated pick-up football game is perhaps the most poignant, but certainly not the only, recollection provided by former residents about how customs of racial segregation eroded at Guild's Lake Courts. The need of the labor market to have employees come together as a community against a common foe enabled workers' children to cross color lines. The integrated shipyards and schools were a step toward integrating housing, bowling alleys, and pools, and pick-up games like the one Ronald described could teach lessons that lasted a lifetime.

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- ¹ Dale Butler, interview by Tanya March, March 24, 2007, audio recording, Portland, OR.
- ² Janice Bell, interview by Tanya March, March 22, 2007, audio recording, Newberg, OR.
- ³ There were no private phones in these homes, even inside the electric units. There were public phone booths, but children relied on knocks on the door and spontaneous gatherings in the common areas.
- ⁴ Peal Borg and I. Borg, transcript of oral interview, p. 3, Oregon Historical Society collection, Portland, OR.
- ⁵ Darlene Hurd, interview by Tanya March, September 6, 2006, audio recording, Portland OR.
- ⁶ Donald Lauinger, interview by Tanya March, September 8, 2006, audio recording, Portland, OR.
- ⁷ Ibid.
- ⁸ Ronald Pedersen, interview by Tanya March, September 12, 2006, audio recording, Vancouver, WA.
- ⁹ "History of Tobacco Regulation," National Commission on Marihuana and Drug Abuse, *Schaffer Library of Drug Policy*, <http://www.druglibrary.org/schaffer/library/studies/nc/nc2b.htm> (accessed March 15, 2010).
- ¹⁰ Still in good repair, the building was converted into offices in 1989 by Naito Properties and renamed "Montgomery Park."
- ¹¹ William Hillgaertner, interview by Tanya March, April 9, 2007, audio recording, Portland, OR.
- ¹² Donald Lauinger, interview by Tanya March, September 8, 2006, audio recording, Portland, OR.
- ¹³ Mike Ryerson, email message to the author, March 20, 2010.
- ¹⁴ Ronald Pedersen, interview by Tanya March, September 12, 2006, audio recording, Vancouver, WA.
- ¹⁵ Dale Butler, interview by Tanya March, March 24, 2007, audio recording, Portland, OR.
- ¹⁶ Ronald Pedersen, interview by Tanya March, September 12, 2006, audio recording, Vancouver, WA.
- ¹⁷ "War Bonds and Stamps" *Guild's Lake School Paper*, Spring 1945, p. 3. Courtesy of Charles H. Charnquist.
- ¹⁸ Ibid.
- ¹⁹ Donald Lauinger, interview by Tanya March, September 8, 2006, audio recording, Portland, OR.
- ²⁰ Founded in 1906, the National Recreation Organization was a private, non-profit group "dedicated to improving the human environment through park, recreation, and leisure opportunities. Its concept of recreation evolved from the development of supervised playgrounds to one that includes a broad range of leisure-time programs and facilities that enrich the human environment." David Klaassen and Sally Ryan, revised by Linnea M. Anderson, "National Recreation Association records," Social Welfare History Center Archives, University of Minnesota Libraries, Minneapolis, <http://special.lib.umn.edu/findaid/xml/sw0074.xml> (accessed Nov. 24, 2009).
- ²¹ Stan Cohen, *V for Victory: America's Home Front during World War II* (Missoula, MT: Pictorial Histories Publishing, 1991), 229.
- ²² Beverly Meskel, "Save War Bonds," *Guild's Lake School Paper*, October 1945, p. 4. Courtesy of Charles H. Charnquist.
- ²³ Ibid., 222.
- ²⁴ William M. Tuttle Jr., "Daddy's Gone to War": *The Second World War in the Lives of America's Children* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 125.
- ²⁵ Mary Stewart, "Stamps and Bonds," *Guild's Lake School Paper*, October 1945, p. 5. Courtesy of Charles H. Charnquist. & "Paper Drive," *Guild's Lake School Paper*, October 1945, p. 5. Courtesy of Charles H. Charnquist.
- ²⁶ Ibid., 122–123.
- ²⁷ Guild's Lake school paper, April 1947, p. 8. Private collection of Alice Hagen.
- ²⁸ "History of the Housing Authority in Portland, Oregon," April 1945, Court exhibit document, Case Number 4420, exhibit F-73, HAP files, Portland City Archives.
- ²⁹ Janice Ball, interview by Tanya March, March 22, 2007, audio recording, Newburg, OR.

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- ³⁰ Image caption, "Housing in War and Peace," brochure (Vancouver, WA: Vancouver Housing Authority, 1972), 41.
- ³¹ Ronald Pedersen, interview by Tanya March, September 12, 2006, audio recording, Vancouver, WA.
- ³² Charles H. Charnquist, "The Guild's Lake Story," unpublished memoirs, 2006, Portland, OR.
- ³³ Bob Hilger, interview by Tanya March, August 28, 2006, audio recording, Portland, OR.
- ³⁴ Susan G. Hauser, *Pickets, Pistols and Politics: A History of the Portland Police Association* (Portland, OR: Portland Police Association, 1996), 27.
- ³⁵ *Ibid.*, 32.
- ³⁶ Richard Engeman, "The Children of Guild's Lake," <http://www.history.pdx.edu/guildslake> [Photo Gallery/People/Guild's Lake Junior Fire Patrol] (accessed March 15, 2007).
- ³⁷ "Guild's Lake Patrol Members Entertained by Jenkins," *The Oregonian*, December 27, 1946, scrapbook of newspaper clippings, HAP files, Portland City Archives, Portland, OR.
- ³⁸ Janice Ball, interview by Tanya March, March 22, 2007, audio recording, Newburg, OR.
- ³⁹ Composition dolls were molded from a mixture of wood pulp and glue. Very popular in America starting in the 1920s, they were much less expensive than ceramic dolls and much less likely to break, although they craze and have not survived as well over time. Patsy dolls were an assortment of composition dolls made and mass marketed under the trademark Effanbee.
- ⁴⁰ Dale Butler, interview by Tanya March, March 24, 2007, audio recording, Portland, OR.
- ⁴¹ Janice Ball, interview by Tanya March, March 22, 2007, audio recording, Newburg, OR.
- ⁴² Dale Butler, interview by Tanya March, March 24, 2007, audio recording, Portland, OR.
- ⁴³ Bob Hilger, interview by Tanya March, August 28, 2006, audio recording, Portland, OR.
- ⁴⁴ *First Guild's Lake Courts Reunion Held at McMenamin's Tavern and Pool*, DVD (2007; Portland, OR).
- ⁴⁵ Donald Lauinger, interview by Tanya March, September 8, 2006, audio recording, Portland, OR.
- ⁴⁶ Arthur McLean, interview by Susan Kristof, March 23, 1979, transcript, Oregon Historical Society Neighborhood History Project, Portland, OR.
- ⁴⁷ Dale Butler, interview by Tanya March, March 24, 2007, audio recording, Portland, OR.
- ⁴⁸ "Fun Trivia: Stanley Cup," *Encyclopedia Fun Trivia*, 2006, <http://www.funtrivia.com/en/Sports/St Stanley-Cup-683.html>.
- ⁴⁹ The Slabtown Festival on September 19, 2009, focused on baseball. A number of female residents who attended this Guild's Lake reunion were just as knowledgeable and interested in the history of the Beavers baseball team as their male contemporaries. Women may not have been allowed to play on baseball teams, but they certainly had a great love of the sport.
- ⁵⁰ Bob Hilger, interview by Tanya March, August 28, 2006, audio recording, Portland, OR.
- ⁵¹ Dale Butler, interview by Tanya March, March 24, 2007, audio recording, Portland, OR.
- ⁵² Ronald Pedersen, interview by Tanya March, September 12, 2006, audio recording, Vancouver, WA.
- ⁵³ *Ibid.*
- ⁵⁴ Clara Shepard, "The Coney Island of the West." *The Spectator*, July 1942.
- ⁵⁵ "The Vancouver African American History Project, 2001–2002," *Center for Columbia River History*, <http://www.ccrh.org/center/vaahppresent.php> (accessed May 27, 2009).
- ⁵⁶ *First Guild's Lake Courts Reunion*, DVD.
- ⁵⁷ "The Coliseum." *Oregon Journal*, September 15, 1942.
- ⁵⁸ Before my interview with Janice, I was concerned that she was so young during the years at Guild's Lake Courts that she would not be able to contribute to the history of the community. I was wrong.
- ⁵⁹ Janice Ball, interview by Tanya March, March 22, 2007, audio recording, Newburg, OR.

CHAPTER 8:

ADULT WORK AND NON-WORK ACTIVITIES IN PORTLAND

Introduction

Many of the children at Guild's Lake Courts moved into adult roles with no "teenage" transition period. As early as fourteen years of age, and certainly by sixteen, most were taking on adult responsibilities and entering the labor market. Non-defense manufacturing industries, such as the Pendleton Woolen Mills, offered employment opportunities to teenagers. Many obtained employment and living wages, deemphasizing the need for continuing education, at least during the war years. As part of this study, only three individuals who were adults employed in Portland in the 1940s were interviewed. The three women were Maria Raz, who worked Portland Parks and Recreation; Edith Bunch, who worked for Montgomery Ward's; and Dorothy Shull, who worked for three firms: Western Union, Willamette Iron and Steel, and Tracy and Company. The anxiety over job security and housing opportunities affected woman heads of households and African Americans the hardest. Males too young to work in manufacturing jobs were encouraged to sell newspapers and start saving for their future. Victory gardens were encouraged at the development, and children from Guild's Lake Courts as young as ten were paid to harvest crops from berries to beans on Sauvie Island. All these agricultural activities were incorporated into urban communities, as farm labor had been pulled out of the farms. Former farm laborers had enlisted or been attracted to defense centers; sadly, the poor soil conditions at the housing project kept most from gardening there.

This chapter only scratches the surface of adult life at Guild's Lake Courts, from employment to free-time pursuits—particularly activities like gardening and non-work endeavors at the community centers inside Guild's Lake Courts.

Wartime Employment, 1942–1945

In 1942 the job opportunities created so rapidly in the Portland-Vancouver region far outpaced the local labor supply. Local defense industries needed to encourage migration just to keep the war production wheels turning. With the exodus of the male labor force into military service abroad, employment opportunities for women in non-traditional roles proliferated, leading to the creation of a vast childcare system (as described in chapter 6). By 1943, it was apparent that companies would need to start recruiting in the South for job vacancies in Portland and Vancouver. This drew African American families out of the South and into defense housing projects, including Guild's Lake Courts.

Women: Employment Successes, 1942–1945

During the war years, some mothers of younger children, unaccustomed to placing their children in childcare, opted to stay at home. Some were forced to leave the workforce to care for their families. Clifford Squires, his wife Irene, and their three children lived at 3905 NW Guam Street in Guild's Lake Courts. Clifford was hired, by the painting department, at Commercial Iron Works on April 20, 1943, and his wife worked as a machine operator at the Rheem Manufacturing Company. But on July 23,

1943, Irene quit her job. The War Manpower Commission Termination Clearance form in the family scrapbook states that she “quit because she had no one to care for her child.” Clifford Squire remained at Willamette Iron and Steel Corporation for the duration of the war and attended functions like the “Production for Victory” Rally on February 21, 1944 at the Portland Public Auditorium on S.W. 3rd Avenue, held by the company to celebrate seventy-five years of operations.¹ Entering the job force and affording childcare was not a viable option for some women who arrived with many young children; among families with six to eleven children, working outside of the home was a monumental task and it is doubtful, since mothers with three children quit, that many larger families had working mothers.

But many women were hired by defense industry firms, and for the first time women were working in many jobs traditionally held by men. The working adults at Guild’s Lake Courts were often in labor-intensive jobs for long hours, six days a week. Many worked in the Kaiser shipyards, doing the kind of work that got them nicknamed “welder bees.” Arnold Leppert recalls this conversation with a “welder bee” colleague:

I used to kid her about being “Rosie the Riveter.” And she would correct me, and give me a little bit of history. She wasn’t Rosie the Riveter on the West Coast. Rosie the Riveter was on the East Coast shipyards. On the West Coast shipyards they welded. Because Kaiser came up with a system of welding. He called it “down-hand” welding, and it was an easier way to weld, and women could do this. I mean, you didn’t have to have real strength in the shoulders to do it... And it was much faster than riveting. And my friend with a sense of humor says... “The only problem is when the welded ships broke in half” (laughing). This was with Oregon Shipyards in Vancouver, west of Vancouver. So this ship went down the ways into the Columbia River, and it broke in half. Right in front of the

dignitaries and everybody... so there were two halves floating out there (laughing). But it didn't sink ... because of it had bulkheads that were closed.²

For a real understanding of the experiences of women working in the shipyards, read historian Amy Kesselman's book, *Fleeting Opportunities*.³

Dorothy (Jensen) Shull was the only shipyard worker interviewed for this study; she and her parents moved into Guild's Lake Courts in February 1944 and lived there for four years. They moved three times within the development. Each time, her family initiated the relocation. They did not like the first unit, which was south facing and heated up uncomfortably from passive solar gain; the second unit was cockroach-infested and was exchanged for a new dwelling expeditiously. Dorothy was the youngest of six children and the only child to move with her parents from North Dakota to Oregon. The family's two youngest boys had enlisted—Philip Jensen in the Army and Ralph Jensen in the Navy. An older sister, Ledora Walp, as a young mother, was the first to move into Guild's Lake Courts, and it was her husband, Dave Walp, who encouraged his Jensen in-laws to apply for housing. Dorothy and her parents were all employed in the defense industry. The entire household worked at Willamette Iron and Steel. She recalls that everyone was working such long hours there was not a lot of socializing among the adults at Guild's Lake Courts. After her short stint at Willamette Iron and Steel, Dorothy went to work for Tracy and Company at NW 10th Avenue and Glisan Street. Tracy and Company was an express package delivery service started by E. W. Tracy in the 1850s. Dorothy had sought out new employment because the shipyards were shutting down and laying off women.

When they settled down in a third unit, Dorothy also found lasting employment after changing jobs frequently her first year in Portland:

Tanya March: So were you already working in the defense industry yourself when you were living at that hotel?

Dorothy Shull: Yes, I started at the shipyard while we were still there [hotel at 1717 West Burnside].

Tanya March: Okay, and ... you spent thirteen months, you said, at Willamette Iron and Steel. Was that related to the shipyard?

Dorothy Shull: When I first came to Portland, I went to work for Western Union because I thought that would be a lifetime place to be. But I thoroughly disliked it. I worked on the counter taking in telegrams. Had to work swing shift. Couldn't do anything with friends in the evening.... I didn't like it at all so I left, took a little time off, and then went to the shipyard ... for Willamette Iron and Steel. They are a Portland company. I don't know if they are still in existence or not.... Willamette Iron and Steel wasn't big just before the war. I was a shipbuilder's helper.

Tanya March: What does a shipbuilder's helper do?

Dorothy Shull: Well, I was on the outfitting dock. The lady I worked with and I put on doorstops and labels over the doors.

Tanya March: When you were living at Guild's Lake [Courts] how did you get to work at Willamette Iron and Steel?

Dorothy Shull: We had a neighbor that we rode with while we worked at the shipyard. He also worked there.⁴

The war machine started to attract African Americans out of the South in 1943. African American women had a distinctly different workplace experience than white women. Although Kaiser is attributed with integration of worksites and efforts were made to force unions to accept African American workers, the women typically worked in single-race crews. According to some accounts, African Americans were given job duties in less desirable conditions in the shipyards.

African Americans: Employment Conflicts, 1943–1945

Industrialist Henry Kaiser, who facilitated the construction of Vanport to house workers at his nearby shipyard, is also remembered for his “Kaiser Specials” or “Magic Carpet” specials. These were chartered trains in 1942 that brought workers to Portland, many of them African Americans from the South.⁵ These workers experienced difficulty entering defense jobs. In 1942 Portland’s long-tenured African Americans and the first minority migrants were both denied work permits and union membership in Portland. African American defense workers, the Kaiser Company, and Boilermakers Local 72 struggled over issues of segregation. The Union was all white and African Americans were being regulated to the lowest levels of employment with the least pay without any redress for previous experience or training. Within a year the war effort dominated the workplace, and employment discrimination became more opaque. *The Oregonian* and *The Columbian* derided both African American and white workers from the East as being inferior. The Kaiser Company blamed the union for the racial tensions, which were the result of the segregation in the defense industry, not of racial inferiority.

Portland was a provincial city, and recruiters did not start reaching out to the South for workers until the end of 1943, when some of the union tensions had dissipated.⁶ Many new arrivals moving into Guild’s Lake Courts willingly navigated this job market because of the lack of opportunities in their home states. Some African Americans choose to relocate to Vancouver where unions were more accepting of minorities. In July 1944 Kaiser’s operations was the largest employer in the region,

Vancouver Shipyards employed 3,642 African Americans; the Oregon Shipbuilding Corporation employed 685 African Americans; the number of African Americans employed in the steel industry, where many Guild's Lake Courts residents worked, is not known.⁷

Gloria (Campbell) Cash was able to share the story of her family's transition from Mississippi to Guild's Lake Courts when she herself was just a baby.⁸ Gloria's second cousin, Ninie Locke, arrived alone in 1943 and was hired by the Kaiser Shipyards (presumably Swan Island). (Mrs. Locke's descendents attribute her early death to asbestos exposure in the shipyards.) Mrs. Locke and her first cousin, Lula Mae Johnson, who came afterwards in 1944, were able to convince Mrs. Johnson's brother-in-law, Ivy Campbell, to bring his wife Lillian and daughter Gloria from Mississippi to Portland in 1945. The American Brake Shoe Company in Linnton, Oregon, employed Ivy Campbell along with many other African American residents of Guild's Lake Courts (see Figure 8-1). Mrs. Locke's contribution to the defense effort resonates in two photographs taken outside of her unit in Guild's Lake Courts, one with her in her Sunday best and the other with her in overalls on her way to work. The photographs are all that exist from the years this family lived at Guild's Lake Courts.



Figure 8-1. (photo) Men employed by American Brake Shoe Company in Linnton, Oregon, c. 1946. Gloria (Campbell) Cash's father, Ivy Campbell, is in the top row, second man on the left, next to his best friend, Mitchell Horsley, who is standing in the top left corner. Both men lived at Guild's Lake Courts. Courtesy of Gloria (Campbell) Cash.



Figure 8-2. (photo) Ninie Locke in her Sunday best outside of her apartment in Guild's Lake Courts where she lived 1943–1949. Courtesy Gloria (Campbell) Cash.



Figure 8-3. (photo) Ninie Locke in work clothes outside of her apartment in Guild's Lake Courts where she lived 1943–1949. Courtesy of Gloria (Campbell) Cash.

While all African Americans were marginalized in the workforce of that era, women of color were doubly discriminated against. They took the mistreatment and the less desirable jobs. According to historian Rudy Pearson, African Americans from the South were stereotyped as more docile and better workers than the “uppity” New York African Americans.⁹ In a report in its April 1957 *Bulletin*, the City Club of Portland stated that 7,000 African Americans had chosen to leave Portland once the industrial demand for semi-skilled workers waned. The report noted that the Oregon

legislature did not prohibit discrimination in employment “because of race, religion, color or national origin” until 1949.¹⁰

Youth: Employment and Savings

Some divisions of the development had manicured lawns maintained by HAP. Dale Butler recalled making some extra money by mowing lawns: “They got lawn mowers at the Rec[reation] Center when my mother was manager at that time. So I’d check out a mower and I’d go around and mow the lawns for 50 cents.”¹¹ Another way the young people of Guild’s Lake Courts earned extra money was picking berries, hops and beans.

Non-Paying Adult Activities, 1942–1950: Victory Gardens

In an era of rationing, growing one’s own food could help expand the mealtime menu. Victory gardens were an old practice dating from World War I’s liberty gardens. Those Guild’s Lake Courts residents interviewed relied on home-cooked meals and, with most units having only an icebox, the short shelf life of foodstuffs made meal preparation a daily task. Self-contained communities like Vanport offered women with children in the daycare centers home-style prepared meals, which they could heat and serve when they returned home. No meal program was offered to residents at Guild’s Lake Courts. Unfortunately, the poor soil at Guild’s Lake Courts kept most residents from cultivating the landscape, except for the most determined.

Victory gardens were attempted by 50 percent of American households. People were encouraged to volunteer labor in their gardens to ease the loss of rural communities as farm laborers were intentionally redirected to urban defense industries and military service. According to the advocacy group, Revive the Victory Garden, in 1943 harvesting from the 20 million victory gardens in the United States accounted for nearly a third of all vegetables consumed domestically and “emphasis was placed on making gardening a family or community effort—not a drudgery, but a pastime, and a national duty.”¹² This urban gardening movement did not take root in the Guild’s Lake Courts community. The children I interviewed had more experience picking berries to earn money for new shoes than harvesting in victory gardens. Very few homes in Guild’s Lake Courts had gardens or landscaping, a fact substantiated in the images gathered during the interviews and reunions.

The wartime public housing developments had none of the Garden City elements that had been incorporated in public housing landscapes prior to the war. Landscape design was not critical to the war effort, but edible-crop-producing landscapes were encouraged. Oddly, photographs of Guild’s Lake Courts included more roses than corn. This could be the photographers’ aesthetic choice or the attempt of new citizens to assimilate into the culture of the “City of Roses.” William Hillgaertner’s father loved growing roses to accent his Victory Garden and beautify their home this extra effort added a presence of permanence to the home; but very few households had formalized victory gardens. There were several reasons: Most adults were too busy working to participate, many residents moved around both inside and

outside the project, and the ever-present sand made growing crops very difficult. One photo in Williams collection shows a patch of corn and other vegetables struggling to grow most were of the more photogenic roses. Janice Bell's mom had a green thumb, but it was limited to tomatoes. Bob Hilger recalled how protective his neighbor was of their crop:

We had a victory garden.... Oh, yeah, big garden [and] the fellow who lived next door to us, he was a heavysset fellow and he was walking kind of funny, we could never quite figure it out. We found out later that he had been getting [that is, stealing] something out of a victory garden and someone shot him with rock salt. In the back (laughing).¹³

After the war, gardening was still encouraged. A local newspaper announced, "Garden Contest Announced for Guild's Lake Residents."¹⁴ Since the Housing Authority had had success with this type of contest at Vanport, it decided to try it out at Guild's Lake. The first prize was 25 dollars. Judges examined the gardens the first week of June and final judging was the week of August 26, 1949.

Postwar Employment, 1946–1950

After the war, businesses started to lay off women and African Americans in an effort to create job opportunities for returning veterans and return the manufacturing workplace to its former male-dominated social norm. Historian Amy Kesselman has observed, "Because postwar culture was dominated by conservative ideas about women, any wartime attempts to safeguard women's rights in the industrial work force quickly became buried under the emerging myth that women workers happily receded into domesticity."¹⁵ In fact, many of these defense industry

women had held jobs before the war, including the mothers of many of the children living in Guild's Lake Courts. In truth, jobs were drying up in Portland, and many service men did not immediately enter the job market because they were using the GI Bill to go to college. In Portland there were not enough places to educate these men. The newly established public institution, Vanport College, was limited in its facilities for public higher education in Portland. Despite their desire to remain in skilled trades, and despite their persistence, women often had to fall back on unskilled employment. To make matters worse, mothers of younger children saw a massive decline in services that supported their ability to remain employed.

Women's Priorities Forced to Change

After the war, employers told women that their place was at home. Maria Raz lost her job with Portland Parks and Recreation because she had married while she was living in University Park and the policy was that only single woman could be employed. At the July 11, 1946, HAP meeting, the commission received a report titled, "Report on Status of Women Employees in Maintenance." Both white and African American women were about to be fired from the ranks of maintenance workers in HAP facilities, because this was perceived as a traditional male job better suited to returning veterans and men losing shipyard jobs. At that time, a total of 208 women maintenance workers were employed. Most disturbing to the top-level executive staff and board members of HAP was that thirty-three of the women were married. HAP was like other city agencies when it came to the marital status of its

public employees, the postwar policy was that woman with husbands should not be in the work force. The HAP commissioners voted to fire all married women and to prohibit women from operating lawnmowers, maintaining grounds, or collecting trash.¹⁶

Many women had lost their husbands in the war years, either to acts of war or to divorce, and the ideal of the intact American nuclear family left these single mothers scrambling to find care for their children. When Edith Bunch separated from her husband before the war ended, she and her two young children returned to Portland from Idaho and Guild's Lake Courts was the only housing available on her budget. Her single sister moved into Edith's three-bedroom four-plex on NW 35th Avenue to help out with the housing expenses. One asset of this community for this working mother was the availability of daycare:

I took my son to the nursery in the morning before I went to work [as a phone order operator at Montgomery Ward's for 56 cents per hour]. And then my daughter went to school by herself, because there were a lot of children going to it [many children were walking to the Guilds Lake School]. And then after school was out, she would go over to the Fruit and Flower nursery again for aftercare. It was almost like an early day Montessori school, with the things they did with the children. It was wonderful.... They did a lot of things there: took the children blackberry picking along St. Helens Road, [and] when they came back, they made blackberry jam. And they made homemade bread, I remember. Rationing was over, but jam was still a treat.... My son remembered making orange marmalade; he remembers the little strips of orange peel to put in the marmalade.... When my children needed to go to the dentist, I would take them in the morning to the dentist for a checkup ... and then I had to go to work. You know, it was different then, and now you can get more time off from work to take your children somewhere. It was different then, you just didn't dare ask for time off for that. So, I would take them to the dentist. Then when he was through, he would put them on the bus to go to Guild's Lake. And my daughter would go with my son to the nursery, then she

would walk to school from there. She was very good about that, then I would call the nursery to make sure that Tommy got there. Then I would call the school. You wouldn't do that today.¹⁷

Many of the interviewees talked of the long hours they spent helping with chores. There was more labor involved in many tasks like washing clothes you were lucky if you had arrived with a wringer washer but many families relied on a more labor intensive system a simple washboard. It was clear that life for women of Guild's Lake Courts meant many hours of work and a limited amount of leisure, particularly if they had responsibilities outside of the home.

African Americans Seek Jobs

As defense jobs dried up, unemployment was the main issue for African Americans in Portland. The City Club of Portland reported to their members that although all HAP housing operations were integrated in 1950, the postwar dilemma was inequity in the private housing market. The labor market failed to provide for skilled employment opportunities and the jobs available were often inaccessible to African Americans because of educational attainment disqualification. Disproportionate unemployment was the norm. In 1946 the rate was 8 percent for whites and 50 percent for African Americans.¹⁸ In the same year an Urban League report identified 1,500 jobless African Americans out of an employable population of 4,500. This figure continued to rise, considering that the Portland City Club report "The Negro in Portland, 1945"¹⁹ included figures like the 106 African Americans working as laborers and housekeepers for the Federal Public Housing Authority

projects in Portland, jobs that diminished along with the housing units as HAP wound down its operation of defense housing. There was a citywide apathy about the housing and employment problems faced by African Americans that could be interpreted as heartless after the 1948 Vanport Flood. It is significant that the population of African Americans from which these unemployment figures are drawn had leveled off at 12,000 individuals from a high of 25,000 in 1944. According to the Urban League's second *Annual Report* in 1946, "The community now has no choice but to integrate or starve these people. At the close of 1946, it seems that the choice has been in favor of starving them."²⁰

Conclusion

Much of the scholarly work written about the homefront in Portland has focused on employment opportunities. Looking at the entire 1940s decade, it becomes clear that while opportunities existed for women and African Americans, the unions in Portland were particularly discriminatory compared with the other expanding West Coast cities. Hopes for prosperity were very short-lived for African Americans. Without continuous and secure employment, residents of Guild's Lake Courts could not secure the American dream of homeownership. Further study of the negative long-term economic impacts on the less skilled workers deserves further study. Workers would not have had as much interaction with the community at Guild's Lake Courts: defense workers worked six days a week with rotating days off, and these inconsistent

work weeks and divergent schedules put the burden of social network formation on stay-at-home mothers and the children living within the home.

- ¹ Irene C. Squires, scrapbook, private collection, 1942–1944. Contains ration books, photos, handbook and, official letters.
- ² Arnold Leppert, interview by Tanya March, April 24, 2007, audio recording, Portland, OR.
- ³ Amy Kesselman, *Fleeting Opportunities: Women Shipyard Workers in Portland and Vancouver during World War II and Reconversion* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1990).
- ⁴ Dorothy Shull, interview by Tanya March. October 15, 2007, audio recording, Portland, OR.
- ⁵ Rudy Pearson, “African Americans in Portland, Oregon, 1940–1950: Living and Working Conditions—A Social History,” unpublished dissertation, Washington State University (May 1996), 27.
- ⁶ June Herzog, “A Study of the Negro Defense Workers in the Portland-Vancouver Area,” unpublished B.A. thesis, Reed College, Portland, OR (1944), 89.
- ⁷ Pearson, “African Americans in Portland,” 37.
- ⁸ *First Guild’s Lake Courts Reunion Held at McMenamin’s Tavern and Pool*, DVD (2007; Portland, OR); 2008.
- ⁹ Pearson, “African Americans in Portland,” 53.
- ¹⁰ *Report on Negro in Portland: A Progress Report 1945–1957* (Portland, OR: Portland City Club Bulletin, 1957), 355, 357.
- ¹¹ Dale Butler, interview by Tanya March, March 24, 2007, audio recording, Portland, OR.
- ¹² “What Is a Victory Garden?” *Revive the Victory Garden*, <http://www.revivevictorygarden.org/> (accessed Sept 1, 2009).
- ¹³ Bob Hilger, interview by Tanya March, August 28, 2006, audio recording, Portland, OR.
- ¹⁴ “Garden Contest Announced for Guild’s Lake Residents,” source of clipping unknown, newspaper clipping HAP scrapbook, HAP files, City of Portland Archives, Portland, OR.
- ¹⁵ Kesselman, *Fleeting Opportunities*, 91.
- ¹⁶ “Report on Status of Women Employees in Maintenance,” March 21, 1946, HAP files, City of Portland Archives, Portland, OR.
- ¹⁷ Edith Bunch, interview by Tanya March, August 15, 2007, tape recording, Portland, OR. Edits returned October 2007.
- ¹⁸ McLendon, 1946. “The Oregon Condition”. Scrapbook HAP files, City of Portland Archives, Portland, OR.
- ¹⁹ “The Negro in Portland, 1945.” *Portland City Club Bulletin*, July 20, 1945, Portland, OR.
- ²⁰ Sue Bishop, “Negro Housing in Portland,” unpublished senior thesis, University of Oregon School of Journalism, Eugene, OR (1958), 12.

CHAPTER 9:

DEMISE OF GUILD'S LAKE COURTS

Introduction

Once peace was achieved in 1945, the middle-class residents of Guild's Lake Courts started moving out of the community. These privileged families transitioned into homeownership or returned to homes they had left behind during the war. Families with the fewest resources remained onsite or relocated to other Housing Authority of Portland (HAP) developments, most often to units being vacated at Vanport. HAP commissioners were determined to expedite the decommissioning of Guild's Lake Courts because much of the housing project was on land parcels with expiring leases. Landlords were taking HAP to court to force evictions of public housing tenants. There was less pressure at Vanport, although HAP was considering industrializing both locations. Kaiser Corporation had sold the Vanport land intact to the federal government, unlike the land upon which Guild's Lake Courts sat, with parcels of land with convoluted property ownership—from HAP owned to federally leased from private individuals. The only other use of leased land for non-trailer Defense-era housing that has come to light was in Cleveland, Ohio, for the Seville Homes project.¹

While the housing authorities created in the 1930s were social agencies with a mission to help house the poor, HAP, created in 1941, deviated from the historic reform-based norm; its goal from inception was to operate and then dismantle all but 400 of the 18,000 defense housing units built in Portland. Nationally the population

totals within public housing were on the decline, and the exodus ratio of white to African Americans was unbalanced because African Americans had fewer options. African Americans, with limited access to the private housing market, were being excluded from suburbia. In response, African Americans were increasing their efforts through tenant associations to fight for integration of public housing developments across the country, including Guild's Lake Courts. The proportional increase of the African American population at Vanport and Guild's Lake Courts was the direct result of unfair housing and labor practices. At the time it was reported that departure of the more affluent families increased the percentage of welfare families, a belief contested by Vanport scholars who felt this was a piece of propaganda used to present a negative stereotype of public housing residents.² This perception became a self-fulfilling prophecy within the population of all HAP developments, increasing the likelihood of pockets of poverty vulnerable to blight removal programs. Guild's Lake Courts dwelling units were being relocated across the state, and vacancies that occurred in the remaining habitable units were offered exclusively to veterans.

The national committee on housing had encouraged gradually rebuilding Vanport into a well-planned community with 12,500 individual detached residences. Henry Kaiser's former vision for a permanent city at Vanport was still circulating, even when the Kaiser Corporation left the region in April 1947.³ The flood destroyed that dream forever, but as long as the idea of a lasting Vanport remained, there was limited motivation for anyone other than tenants at any of the Guild's Lake Courts properties to advocate for a permanent community there.

Industrialists were eager to reclaim their Northwest Portland landholdings to expand their various port, steel, timber, oil, and railway enterprises. One significant landowner was the Port of Portland; however, no information appeared in the archival research on the Port's landholdings in the Guild's Lake District.⁴ Efforts were made by HAP and the mayor's office to streamline the decommissioning of units in the Guild's Lake District, but federal regulations delayed industrialization. Still the demolition of housing units in the Guild's Lake District continued unabated after the Vanport Flood in May 1948. In June 1948, the area between Timber Structures, on the southwest corner of Yeon and NW 29th, and Fry Roofing, which had been cleared of housing in 1946, contained 400 federal defense housing surplus trailers that served as homes for flood evacuees. A year later families occupied only twenty of these trailers.⁵ By 1951 all of the 400 trailers and the 2,632 original housing units of Guild's Lake Courts were gone; in 1953 HAP sold off all the power lines and the last of the permanent community facilities in the Guild's Lake District.

Wartime, 1942–1945: Moving within the Project

During the war years many families relocated within individual HAP properties. Residents of Guild's Lake Courts often tried to improve their housing situation by placing themselves on a waiting list for improved housing in the community, such as an electric unit or one with more rooms or a quieter location. Most knew that the 358 units designed by Morris Whitehouse (see details in chapter 4) were superior to the 2,272 units of row housing. These electric units with modern

appliances and grass lawns provided by HAP represented the house of the future. The row houses lacked their charm, appearing more like barracks resting on sand dunes.

Households were charged a \$25 cleaning fee for each relocation within the defense housing system. The intent of the fee was to discourage unnecessary moves, but staff at the Guild's Lake Courts onsite housing office reported that it had failed as a deterrent. The office was processing twenty-five moving requests a week, in addition to housing requests by new applicants. On September 21, 1944, the board of HAP, in an atypical move responding to the needs of the community, passed a motion to suspend the moving-out cleaning fee. According to the board, "people like to be near friends" and there were shortages of two- and three-bedroom units.⁶ This statement made the emotional plea to assist families by encouraging relatives to live in proximity to each other when possible, then admitted that the lack of units with sufficient rooms for large families should not punish those waiting for adequate housing where boys and girls could have separate sleeping quarters. As early as 1945, decommissioning and removing dwelling units from Guild's Lake Courts was proceeding at a fast pace. Two photographs (figures 9-1 and 9-2) show the sorting of reusable materials from Guild's Lake Courts.

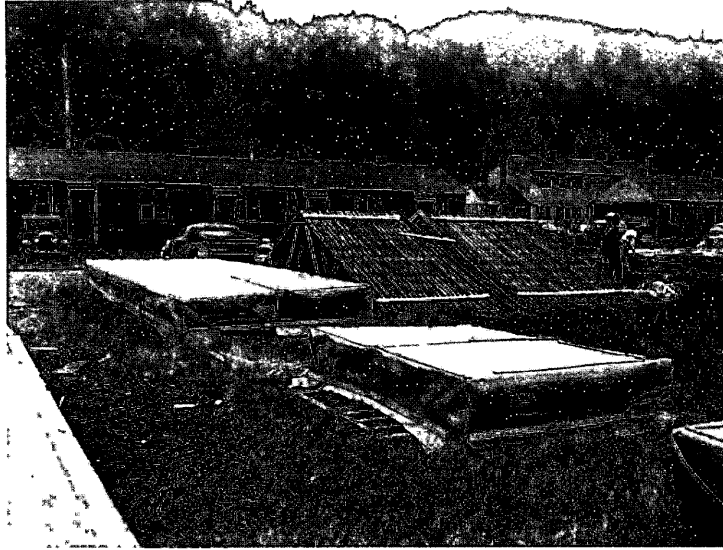


Figure 9-1. (photo) Units at Guild's Lake Courts being dismantled in 1946. Location not given; assumed to be units from 44th Court. Courtesy of the City of Portland Archives A2001.



Figure 9-2. (photo) Salvage pile of sinks, pipes, and water heaters from dismantled Guild's Lake Courts units in 1946. Location not given on back of photograph. These are units from 44th Court because only the African American section had a fence and because of the proximity of the railroad to the units. The siding on these units appears to be thick paper over gypsum board. Courtesy of the City of Portland Archives, A2001.

Children were sometimes oblivious that their parents were on waiting lists for relocation within Guild's Lake Courts. Donald Lauinger's mother moved her family out of their first unit in Guild's Lake Courts at 5373 Luzon Street.⁷ Nearly sixty years later, he asked his mother why they had moved, and she explained that it was because of the "[t]raffic and industrial noises; it was just plain noisy."⁸ The family relocated to a duplex on Buna Street where they lived until the summer of 1946.

The Disposition Phase: 1945–1951

Just as the construction of the units had hinged on "speed" as the "most essential factor in the new program,"⁹ the desire to make industrial land available quickly was the driving factor for their removal. The disassembling was being done through federal contracts, and the HAP commissioners were concerned that local companies were not profiting from these activities because bids were not being solicited in local papers.¹⁰ The units in figures 9-1 and 9-2 appear to be in the process of being gutted for materials, such as sinks, to be reused as spare parts for units still being operated by HAP, not disassembled for relocation.

From the inception of the largest public housing operation in the country, HAP commissioners opposed the creation of and planning for anything other than a modest postwar housing program. When the Federal Public Housing Authority (FPHA) suggested that HAP use its power as a housing authority to purchase and declare permanent the 358 electric units designed by Morris Whitehouse, HAP's response was to stonewall.¹¹ The federal government officials informed HAP that a program using a

federally “‘aided’ plan (under Public 671)” would provide the capital needed to purchase the land under the electric units and enable HAP to manage these units as permanent housing after the war.¹² Chairman Gartrell sought to avoid the reclassification, saying, “any discussion as to placing these units in use as low-rent, should be deferred until after the war.”¹³

The FPHA was reluctant to push for the federal government obtaining the electric units without city support; no other effort by the federal government to reclassify the units as permanent was recorded in HAP minutes until reclassification occurred as part of the relocation and dismantling program. At a special meeting on March 23, 1943, HAP executive director Harry D. Freeman¹⁴ told Mr. Gifford Sobey, representing the FPHA of Seattle, that he did not think any land in the Guild’s Lake District should be used for postwar housing:

the location of Guild’s Lake would be unsuitable for any dwelling under normal conditions, and that it was even unsuitable for temporary use, but that the Authority used that space only for the reason that they could find no other location outside the Guild’s Lake area to serve [the need for labor housing in proximity to] nearby industries.¹⁵

Freeman held the post of executive director of HAP from 1941 to 1951,¹⁶ and reflecting on positions taken during meetings of the HAP board, he appears to have been in full agreement with the commissioners during the length of his employment. At the March 23, 1943, meeting, Chester A. Moores, the commercial realtor and former president of the Realty Board, disparaged the proposal to safeguard the electric units for postwar use; he “said such action would meet strong resistance.”¹⁷ In September 1944 Gartrell resigned and Moores took over as the chairman of HAP,

assuring that all the units Guild's Lake Courts would remain classified as temporary until they were sold at auction and relocated across Oregon.

Moore only served as commissioner from September 1944 until December 1945 when he was replaced by Mr. Herbert J. Dahlke.¹⁸ According to local political historian Jewel Lansing, Moore's chief influence on the development of Portland was as an officer of the Portland Area Post War Development Committee, consisting of six men, none of whom held an elected office yet all had very strong influence in public decisions.¹⁹ This committee opposed public housing and offered no deviation from HAP's plans to eliminate all the defense housing units that had been classified as temporary in 1942.

At the HAP Commission board meeting on July 25, 1944, one topic was the recent FPHA statement that the national policy was to enforce the plan at the inception of the defense housing program and that all temporary units would be taken apart for their materials only and that their disposition would be handled by "city governmental agencies." The meeting minutes state, "Mr. Klutznick, Commissioner, FPHA, made the definitive statement that no temporary war housing will be used as dwelling units in the postwar period."²⁰ By avoiding the reclassification of any units at Guild's Lake Courts from temporary to permanent, the board had guaranteed that only the units at Columbia Villa and Dekum Court would not be affected under the Removal Provision of the Lanham Act. The bold plan to reduce the HAP operation by 18,815 dwellings was unprecedented; no other housing authority was planning to dissolve its housing portfolio and basically withdraw from the housing market as an entity. After the war,

HAP planned to operate only 485 temporary units at Dekum Court, which served families from the Portland Army Air Base, and the 400 permanent units at Columbia Villa. Since only federal agencies required fair hiring practices, the loss of thousands of HAP units would not only disproportionately affect the housing stock available to African Americans, it would also negatively affect African American workers as jobs at HAP disappeared along with the housing.

The federal government required all cities to conduct postwar plans. Portland's mayor appointed key figures, who represented banking, industry, and real estate interests, to address the mandate of the War Planning Board. These appointees engaged a nationally recognized planning firm headed by Robert Moses. Moses was a top transportation, housing, and park planning expert and one of the men who had successfully engineered one-third of all New Deal funds to be spent on projects in New York State. Using \$75,000 in public funds, the boosters of Portland engaged his services to produce a planning guide for the postwar city, the 1943 report "Portland Improvement."

Six months after the news that FPHA's intent not to reclassify temporary housing had been warmly received, the commission was making headway in promoting its postwar vision of a city with very limited public housing. Moses visited Portland to promote the plan; he understood that the businessmen who had hired his firm had no desire to retain the "war workers"—a term understood to mean African Americans.²¹ At the HAP Commission board meeting on September 9, 1940, Freeman reported on his conference with the five representatives from the consultant group for

postwar planning. Moses's representatives requested details from Freeman for HAP's program and timeline for liquidation of temporary dwelling units. Freeman informed them that there was no need for postwar public housing construction in Portland and that all the existing units would be dismantled within two years of the war's end.²² Moses's team echoed the suggestion to dispose of all temporary and unneeded war housing, which pleased Moores, the new chairman of the HAP Board.²³

The bold plan was made public in November 1943. Estimated to cost \$75 million to implement, the plan did not include the construction or rehabilitation of any public housing. In May 1944, four bond measures emerged from the plan. These addressed sewage disposal, dock improvements, roads, bridges, and schools. Voters approved all four bonds. The plan, as a complete document, was approved by Portland's City Council in September 1944.²⁴

At the close of the war, the HAP board started to discuss a strategy for the swaths of housing they controlled. There was talk of using incentives to move residents out of Vanport to other locations, including, oddly enough, Guild's Lake Courts. The minutes of the July 5, 1945, meeting state that "there are still other projects which could be used on a temporary basis and that the dwelling units in these other projects could be offered to the remaining tenants of Vanport."²⁵ There were a number of policy changes regarding the prioritization of decommissioning Vanport versus Guild's Lake Courts, regarding which location should be promoted first for industrial development. On October 18, 1945, HAP commissioners settled on clearing all but the African American section of Guild's Lake Courts:

Commissioner Detloff suggested that perhaps rather than moving tenants from Vanport City to Guild's Lake [Courts] that it would simplify procedures by moving tenants from Guild's Lake [Courts] to Vanport City instead. The Commissioners agreed that this may be a good plan since much of Guild's Lake Project is located on leased land which would not involve purchase of property and where disposition would not be as complicated as in Vanport City. He said he would be in favor of vacating Guild's Lake as industrial demands required but to retain the balance of the project for use of colored tenants.²⁶

The discussions of the HAP commissioners in 1945 were akin to playing an elaborate chess game, where strategizing a prosperous future excluded any need to confer about the massive restructuring of the region's housing supply; it was as if there were no social impact of their choices. The HAP board was flexible with the timing and kept open all options for industrialization. With the loss of defense contracts, the creation of new manufacturing jobs was prioritized.

HAP made minimal efforts to maintain its position as a housing authority, with HAP commissioners actively promoting the development of Vanport and Guild's Lake District as ideal locations for industrial clusters. The members of the HAP board from its inception represented the interests of private property developers; none of these men ever intended to operate a public housing portfolio that would compete against the private market. In fact they feared that maintaining any housing other than that at Columbia Villa would generally bring down property values and create areas of blight and encourage outsiders to linger on in Oregon after the war.

With minimal postwar opportunities for satisfactory jobs and housing in Portland, as many as half of the defense workers who had migrated there chose to relocate. Veterans were returning home in need of civilian jobs and shipyards and

other defense industries were closing. In October 1945, large land purchases in the Guild's Lake District should have ensured that Guild's Lake Courts would be the first project "reconverted." Residents would need to be relocated to accommodate industry, as Multnomah County,²⁷ the City of Portland, and the Port of Portland joined with private landholders to sell their land holdings to three private developers: 28 acres to Standard Oil, 12.25 acres to Pacific Chain, and 8.33 acres to Mount Hood Soap Company.²⁸ Since many of the units on land projected for development were occupied, evacuation would have to get underway immediately for 2,800 tenants.

Postwar, 1946–1948: Moving within the Project and out of the Project

Throughout the war, advertisers had been enticing consumers with electric appliances and construction advances for the homes of the future. Now servicemen were coming home and seeking out those homes, Portland's rationing and rent controls were ending, and people wanted to cash in and spend their war bonds. Unfortunately for many civilian war workers, manufacturing jobs were drying up just as veterans were entering the labor market. City leaders wanted to retain and expand manufacturing jobs for returning veterans and assumed that the women workers would willingly become housewives again and African Americans would quietly return to the South. The vision of the world of tomorrow presented by the media and reinforced by postwar planners and developers linked corporations with the "bright future."²⁹ One Guild's Lake Courts resident, Arnold Leppert, even remembered the advertisements when he talked about the electric stove in his unit: "The advertising created the desire.

It is a kick now looking back, seeing those 1950s [1940s] ads where the housewife is cooking and always in heels...there was prosperity.”³⁰

Urban areas received less housing financing from the G.I. Bill, which was more willing to finance loans to veterans in new homes built in the suburbs. Families had been virtually forced to save money for years as factories produced few consumer goods; now consumers wanted manufacturers to produce new, innovative appliances, not just re-tooled pre-war models. While whites were encouraged to become homeowners, advertisers in African American periodicals like *Ebony* promoted spending war-bond proceeds on material goods like Cadillac cars. African American consumers were “deliberately blocked from entering the white ‘world of tomorrow.’”³¹ With the implementation of new federal loan programs, homeownership became a real possibility for a new generation of Americans. The war bond ads in *McCall’s*, *House Beautiful*, *Time Magazine*, *Business Week*, *Saturday Evening Post*, and *Life Magazine* sponsored by appliance manufacturers during the war had encouraged families to save up for their postwar electric kitchens.³²

Some interviewees who had lived in Guild’s Lake Courts as children stated that their parents had retained and rented out their primary home (often in another state) to take advantage of wartime jobs on the West Coast. These interviewees talked of the family sacrificing for the war effort, which for some included moving into public housing in order to serve their country. When the war ended their duty was over, and it was time to move on to their “home of their future.” Teenagers had saved

up money as well: one interviewee had accumulated enough selling newspapers to buy a horse; others used their personal savings towards higher education.

Not everyone who left Guild's Lake Courts after the war stayed away. Dale Lee Butler lived in a least three units at Guild's Lake Courts. Family members moved into their first unit in 1943. They were placed on the waiting list for a year and a half before they were able to move into an electric unit. (Having a mother who worked at the recreation center, rather than in a defense industry, did not help the household rise up the waiting list.) The Butlers moved back to Idaho in 1946, but in 1948 they returned to Guild's Lake Courts; Dale's mother got a job at the nearby Montgomery Ward department store and Dale graduated from Guild's Lake School in 1949.³³

Families who wanted to move from Guild's Lake Courts to other HAP housing were put on waiting lists. There were units available in Guild's Lake Courts, but those units often had only one bedroom, and with the baby boom beginning, these dwellings were unsuitable for families with children. Additionally some vacancies at Guild's Lake Courts were left unfilled because the managers who maintained the waiting lists were directed to reduce the population at some locations to expedite industrial use. Some families were being evicted because income ceilings started to be part of the evaluation for qualification to live in defense housing units. These competing factors produced long waiting lists despite a large number of vacancies at each development. An antiquated and prejudiced bureaucracy exacerbated this problem.

The combination of waiting lists and segregation created a public relations nightmare at segregated HAP projects. The press and pro-housing advocates used the

massive waiting lists as an indicator of the great need and desire of the common citizen to be housed and as a tool to promote the creation of a permanent public housing program in Portland. The HAP commission minutes of May 17, 1945, mention an article and table that appeared in *The Oregonian*. Two such tables appear as tables 9-1 and 9-2, showing “that there is still a need for housing in Portland and emphasizing the number of families on the waiting list.”³⁴ At that meeting the HAP commissioners passed a resolution to no longer release data on the waiting lists.³⁵ To advance their “spin control,” they appointed a single staff member, Ada Heges, to handle diplomacy and newspaper publicity, to prepare all press releases, and to focus all communications with the press on vacancies and dismantling, thereby preventing further press use of the waiting list to criticize HAP’s ability to fulfill its public mission.

The policy in 1945 was to accommodate industry whenever a documented offer for legitimate site utilization came to the attention of HAP. The desired parcel of land would only be deeded to the new party after HAP staff finished evicting or relocating the tenants.³⁶ HAP was continually forced to re-prioritize areas to depopulate not only at the micro-level within Guild’s Lake Courts and other projects but also within the scope of which community to dismantle first in the entire system it managed.

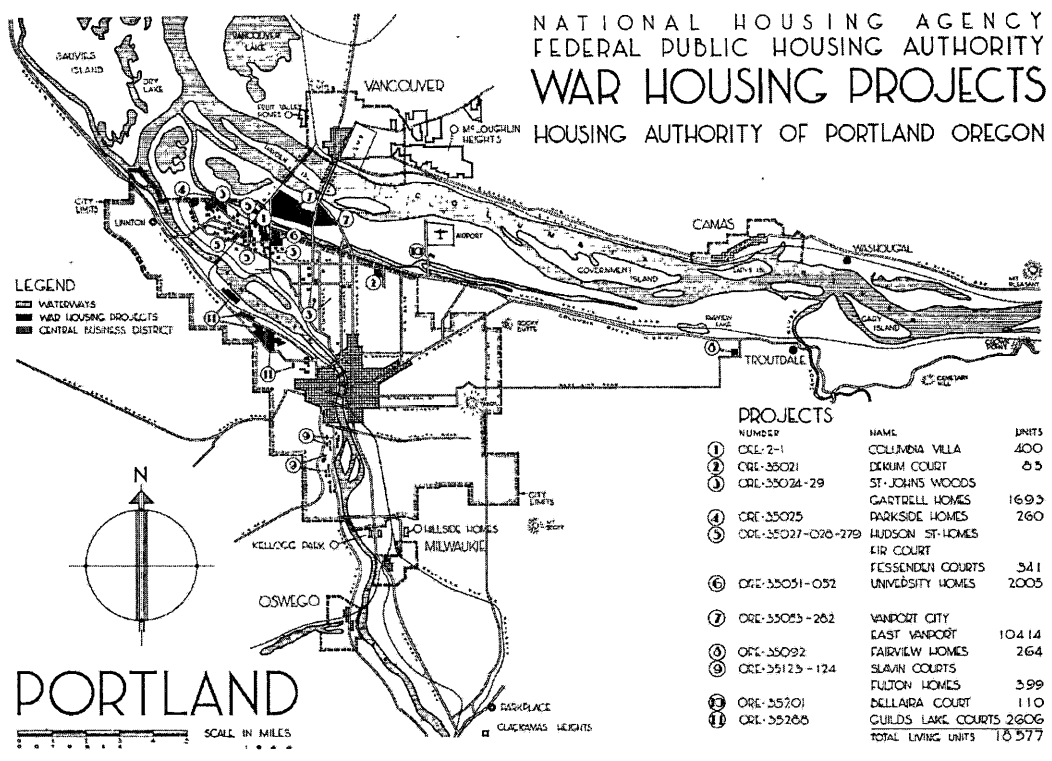


Figure 9-3. (map) Federal Housing Projects of Portland, Oregon, 1943. This includes locations of Vancouver and Clackamas Defense-era developments. Courtesy of the City of Portland Archives.

Table 9-1. Portland-Vancouver defense housing occupancy data, December 1944

Project	Total Units	Occupied Units	Waiting List	Population
Housing Authority of Portland	18,445	17,395	1,994	62,551
Columbia Villa	400	399	69	1,436
Dekum Court	85	85	53	296
St. John's Woods & Gartrell Homes	1,693	1,693	176	1,094
Parkside Homes	260	260	14	836
Hudson Street Homes & Fir Court	341	338	48	1,216
Fessenden Courts & Univ. Homes	2,005	1,975	429	7,113
Vanport & East Vanport	10,292	9,537	858	34,383
Fairview Homes	264	172	21	619
Slavin Courts & Fulton Homes	399	393	79	1,414
Bellaire Court	110	N/A*	N/A	N/A
Guild's Lake Courts	2,606	2,540	247	9,144
Clackamas Housing Authority	800	800	180	2,880
Clackamas Heights	100	100	11	360
Hillside Park	100	100	19	360
Kellogg Park	600	600	150	2,160
Timberland Homes	40	40	40	144
Vancouver Housing Authority	12,037	11,133	Not Pubic	39,877
McLoughlin Heights	6,095	5,883	N/A	21,078
Ogden Meadows	1,952	1,873	N/A	6,742
Fourth Plain	200	199	N/A	716
Fruit Valley	500	464	N/A	1,570
Bagley Downs	2,100	1,970	N/A	7,079
Burton Homes	1,200	743	N/A	2,674

Source: Wallace Turner. "105,000 now occupy city's vast projects." *The Oregonian*, December 31, 1944, HAP files scrapbook City of Portland Archives.

* Data not available.

Table 9-2. HAP defense housing occupancy data, 1944–June 1945

Project	Total Units 1944 (other source)	Total Units 1945	No. Units Occupied	% Units Occupied
Housing Authority of Portland	18,445	18,339	15,171*	82.3
Columbia Villa	400	400	396	99
Dekum Court	85	85	85	100
St. John's Woods & Gartrell Homes	1,693	1,693	1,650	97.4
Parkside Homes	260	260	260	100
Hudson Street Homes & Fir Court	341	341	333	97.6
(*) University Homes	2,005	2,005	1,867	93.1
(*) Vanport City	10,292	10,286*	7,629	74.1
Fairview Homes	264	264	206	78
Slavin Courts & Fulton Homes	399	399	392	98.2
Bellaire Court	110	N/A**	N/A	N/A
Guild's Lake Courts	2,606	2,606	2,353	90.3

Source: *The Oregonian*, June 24, 1945, HAP files City of Portland Archives

* 700 units in these developments occupied by veterans

** Data not available.

As tables 9-1 and 9-2 show, occupancy figures released to the press always lacked race data. The figures from June 1945 (Table 9-2) are the first example of HAP not releasing waiting list data from the newspaper clippings it maintained in scrapbooks (although the Vancouver Housing Authority had stopped releasing that data as early as December 1944). The other information missing in 1945 is the population data, which was still presented in 1944. The mid-1943 data for the population of African Americans at Guild's Lake Courts (1,300) and Vanport (2,000) matched to "spot segregation" (geographic segregation) is one of the few available records of the effort of HAP to clearly demarcate color lines in the projects. These details were part of a petition to the FHA made by churches and social groups seeking desegregation.³⁷

Herbert J. Dahlke, one of Mayor Riley's five original HAP appointees, served as a HAP commissioner until 1954.³⁸ A private apartment owner,³⁹ Dahlke seemed particularly concerned that the plan to demolish the housing at Guild's Lake Courts might be held up. He "recommended that Lester Humphreys, legal counsel [for HAP], go to Seattle to follow through on the proposed industrial sites in the Guild's Lake District to avert the possibility of Portland losing the new manufacturing industry."⁴⁰ The HAP board on July 5, 1945, recognized a potential pitfall for their vision of transforming the Guild's Lake District into an industrial region: it had not considered that its role, as defined by the federal government, to *promote housing* would run counter to its postwar plans.

At the July 5 meeting, Mr. Epstein arrived with unexpected and displeasing news when he explained that "industrial land goes to the [federal] Reconstruction Finance Corporation for disposition... [But] if the property were residential land, it would be assigned to the [FPHA] for disposition; in other words, the ultimate character of the land [would be residential]."⁴¹ Mr. Epstein's use of the word *character*, as interchangeable with the current use, would require residential lands held by the federal government to stay residential after the war. Since the majority of the land on which Guild's Lake Courts was built was only *leased* to HAP, the stronger case was to require that Guild's Lake Courts remain zoned for residential use. It would have been untenable had the federal government acted upon this right, since the federal agency that insured residential loans had classified this area as industrial in 1937.

Portland dodged all of the postwar federal housing programs—since the HAP commissioners were intent on eliminating housing units, there was no effort by the authority to privatize development or to build public housing dwellings under the new federal programs. One such program, the Mutual Ownership Defense Housing Program, created homeownership opportunities for middle-income workers moving into uncertain wartime employment, but no housing authority in the Northwest had participated. Pennypack Woods in Philadelphia is a prime example of a program to build postwar housing during the war. HAP purposely avoided having any of the projects it managed participate in this program because the board members desired no competition from HAP housing with their own private market investments.

It is possible that one of the motivations not to allow residents the ability to purchase their homes was to prohibit African Americans from purchasing homes, but there is no evidence to support this conjecture. The Mutual Ownership Defense Housing Program had required the provision of housing for African Americans. The Lanham-built houses, when converted into permanent private housing, offered some of the first opportunities for African American homeownership as the suburbs were created in the 1950s. The legislation had mandated a certain number of housing units be built for non-white workers. Historian Andrew Wise noted that Lanham Act housing was often built on the fringe of cities; “thus a disproportionate number of war housing units were built near existing black neighborhoods outside the urban core, reinforcing prewar black residence on the suburban fringe.”⁴² Scholars have noted that African Americans were left out of the suburbanization movement; perhaps the

African American suburbanization of the 1950s has been under-analyzed because those suburbs became a part of the city just as the streetcar suburbs of 1800s have been absorbed and lost the suburban distinction.

Acute postwar housing shortages in San Francisco had prompted integration of Hunter's Point, a Navy-built development. African Americans there had once been segregated to the Navy Road district. After the war African Americans were able to retain this enclave and it had the highest rate of homeownership among African Americans in the entire city. Unfortunately, this isolated neighborhood over time became a ghetto of San Francisco. This is just the type of blighted community HAP wished to avoid creating in Portland. Dissolving federal defense communities was limited to eradicating housing units; the federal government had financed the construction of many non-residential structures made to permanent standards to serve the defense populations in Portland, yet with a few exceptions, such as the University Park Community Center, most of these were demolished as well. The removal of the community buildings upset members of the residential communities on the fringe of the projects that had hoped that the institutions would outlast the dwellings. Nonetheless, the HAP Commission's board and executive staff were businessmen with real estate interests who were willing to grapple with the residents and the federal government to ensure that postwar residential occupancy tapered off.⁴³

Despite the approximately \$6 million spent to create Guild's Lake Courts, the value of the land as an industrial district, not the value of the land improvements, was the deciding factor for the area's next incarnation. The marshlands, turned world's fair

grounds, turned massive housing complex, were once again about to be transformed unrecognizably. Figure 9-4 shows a cartoonist's depiction of the push to industrialize the Guild's Lake District as a train rushing towards an unavoidable crash into the housing complex.

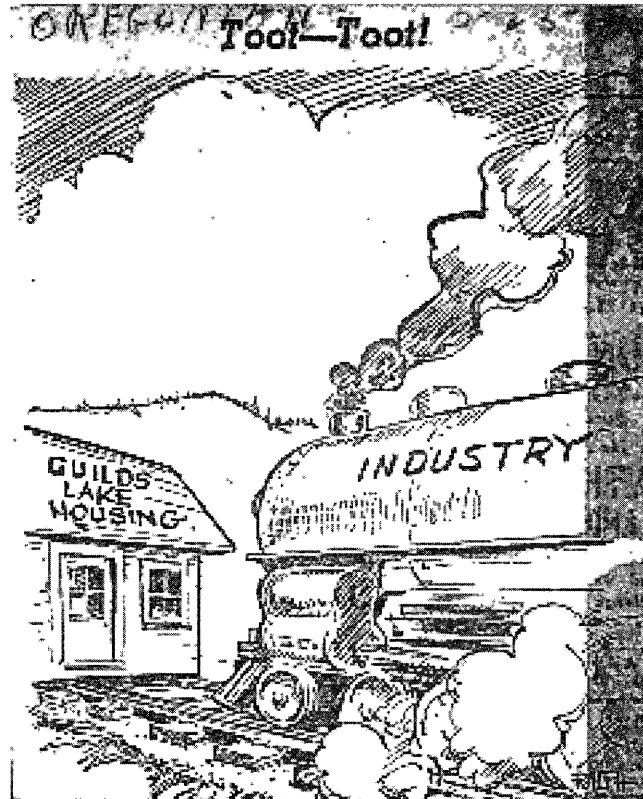


Figure 9-4. (drawing) Cartoon taped into the HAP scrapbook, clipped from *The Oregonian*, “Toot—Toot!” May 23, 1946, illustrating the push to industrialize the Guild's Lake District at the expense of its housing. Courtesy of the City of Portland Archives.

That figurative train was about to do \$5,783,359 of damage to the Guild's Lake Courts.⁴⁴ Another HAP document, from 1945, states that Guild's Lake Courts cost \$6,221,517 to construct.⁴⁵ The first figure may only account for the cost of the housing units, not the community centers. Interestingly the real train company (SP&S

Railways) jockeying to take control of much of the leased land at Guild's Lake Courts was one of the few employers hiring African Americans after the war. Only 72 acres, a fraction of the land used by HAP at Guild's Lake District, had been purchased by the federal government; the remainder was privately owned land that the FPHA had leased and developed. Owners of the various properties had been amenable to the federal leases, even though they might individually detest public housing, because the government had contributed the skills and labor, through the Army Corps of Engineers, and the materials needed to stabilize the site, control flooding, and develop infrastructure to accompany the housing units. These site improvements made the Guild's Lake District ripe for postwar industrial development. Once the war was over, the landowners wanted the housing *expeditiously* cleared away.

Property Holders' and Developers' Perspectives

The Guild's Lake Courts industrialization expansion story has many distinct narratives. In order to express the narrative from the perspective of the developers, the next section explores a sampling of these stakeholders' efforts to reclaim their landholdings. Within two months after the war's end, commercial stakeholders were applying to the FPHA for their properties in the Guild's Lake District to be vacated of temporary housing units. The HAP Commission and Portland City Council were on the side of the industrial developers; they wished to nurture job creation, not housing retention. The HAP commissioners required frequent updates from staff members on the progress of disposition at Guild's Lake Courts:

The executive director reported that the proposed program for dismantling of dwelling units at Guild's Lake [Courts] had been some what modified. He explained that a different area would be affected and that both the proposal of the Pacific Chain and Manufacturing Company and the Central Counties Company could be taken care of and that the authority is at present awaiting official reply from FPHA.⁴⁶

Leases in the Guild's Lake District were lapsing, and tenants needed to be relocated. In April of 1947 HAP had lost a key lease on the tract of housing bounded by NW 21st and 22nd avenues and NW Quimby and Raleigh streets,⁴⁷ a remote site managed by the Guild's Lake Courts' rental office.⁴⁸ Tenants evicted from these units were given priority in vacant units throughout the city's public housing program, including housing at Vanport. The problem was that the families in these dwelling were quite large, and few HAP dwellings could accommodate their size.

Key Landowners at Guild's Lake Courts

An excellent example of the industrialists presenting themselves as a united front against the specter of public housing was recorded at a meeting at Mayor Riley's office, attended by the key players on March 27, 1946. The industrialists, FPHA staff, NHA staff, and the HAP staff and commissioners gathered to discuss the growing concern of industrial enterprises that the transfer and termination of housing units in the Guild's Lake District was lagging in. The mayor backed the interests of the four firms present: Union Pacific Railway Co., Inland Motor Freight, Pacific Chain and Manufacturing, and Standard Oil. According to the minutes, the mayor proclaimed:

[I]f Portland does not get industry established it will not get facilities built to provide for industry and the whole scheme of development [in the

Guild's Lake District] would collapse. He is not one of those, he said, to "sit back and see it collapse." Mayor Riley said that his objective has been and is now, and will continue to be, to cut straight through any resistance that is offered to development of desirable industry that wants to come to this locality.⁴⁹

The City intended to follow through and clear all obstacles to industrialization in the Guild's Lake District; the element of timing for job creation was key.

Crown-Zellerbach, a major timber company, waited months until the twenty households on its property could be relocated for two reasons. First, a number of other sites were also being cleared and, second, relocating these particularly large families was difficult for HAP. Crown-Zellerbach was a powerful firm accustomed to getting its way; as part of the war effort the firm had been granted permission by the Forest Service to procure lumber from the Bull Run Watershed, a forested area on Mt. Hood normally restricted as the source of Portland's drinking water.⁵⁰ In a characteristic display of power, Crown-Zellerbach went on a legal attack on HAP as manager of a federal housing project to regain its landholdings in the Guild's Lake District. The following excerpt describes legal correspondence Crown-Zellerbach sent to HAP in April 1947. The strength of the attack seems ironic when it is clear that the HAP commissioners sided with the property owners but perhaps the owners understood that it was the federal bureaucracy, not the HAP staff, that was insisting on relocating the tenants:

The Executive Director presented correspondence from the Crown-Zellerbach Corporation requesting that the west half of the block bound[ed] by N.W. 21st, 22nd, Quimby, and Raleigh, in the Guild's Lake Project, be vacated and released to the owners by the Federal Public Housing Authority. The correspondence stated that the lease had expired and that the government is now trespassing. Because it would be extremely difficult

to rehouse the 20 large families directly involved in the removal of the buildings, and in view of the status of the lease on the property, it was the unanimous option of the Commissioners that the question should be referred to the regional Office of the Federal Public Housing Authority for a decision.⁵¹

Despite the pressure from Crown-Zellerbach there were more pressing issues for HAP that year: other areas within Guild's Lake Courts that required moving hundreds of families, all needing relocation to public housing dwellings within HAP projects. The residents started realizing as they were shuffled around that their homes were in peril, and they too started to attack HAP in the courts. Agitated tenants from the all-white housing sections of Guild's Lake Courts were frustrated that even if they so desired, the HAP staff would not allow them to relocate to the African American section of the community. HAP was maintaining the color line, even though residents, feeling harassed by development pressures, were seeking to relocate to where industrialization pressure was not active; this was the African American section and it was the furthest from downtown Portland.

Developers' requests to HAP to relinquish residential property in the Guild's Lake District continued. The evolving names of property holders for a single tax lot challenging the use of land holding indicates that the site leases had not only been cobbled together but that a number of properties had been changing hands during the time the leases were in effect. That same month, one day after the federal government loss of the lease option on the Crown-Zellerbach site, another grouping of dwellings on a larger parcel of land with 236 units needed to be vacated immediately. These temporary dwelling units were located at NW Yeon Street and NW 35th Avenue, on

the extreme northern edge of the “white development,” near the HAP housing office. Because these dwellings were smaller, the housing authority was able to relocate residents to other housing developments with vacancies, usually at Vanport. The federal government accepted this order to vacate by the property owner since families were easily accommodated, and then announced an invitation to bid on units for demolition and removal.⁵²

Release of land in Guild’s Lake District to private enterprise. Commissioner Detloff asked if it was true that a certain amount of land in the Guild’s Lake District is being released to the Standard Oil Company and the Pacific Chain and Manufacturing Company. Mr. Freeman advised that the territory in question has been in “terminated” status for some time but that Mr. Whitney, Land Adviser of the FHA, stated that he had no definite knowledge regarding removal of the dwelling units at this time but that information to that effect had been issued by someone in Mr. Klutznick’s office in Washington.⁵³

For Pacific Chain and Manufacturing, the termination of these units could not happen fast enough: Figure 9-5 shows a Pacific Chain warehouse being constructed over a row house in Guild’s Lake Courts. This image would be comical if it were not so tragic.

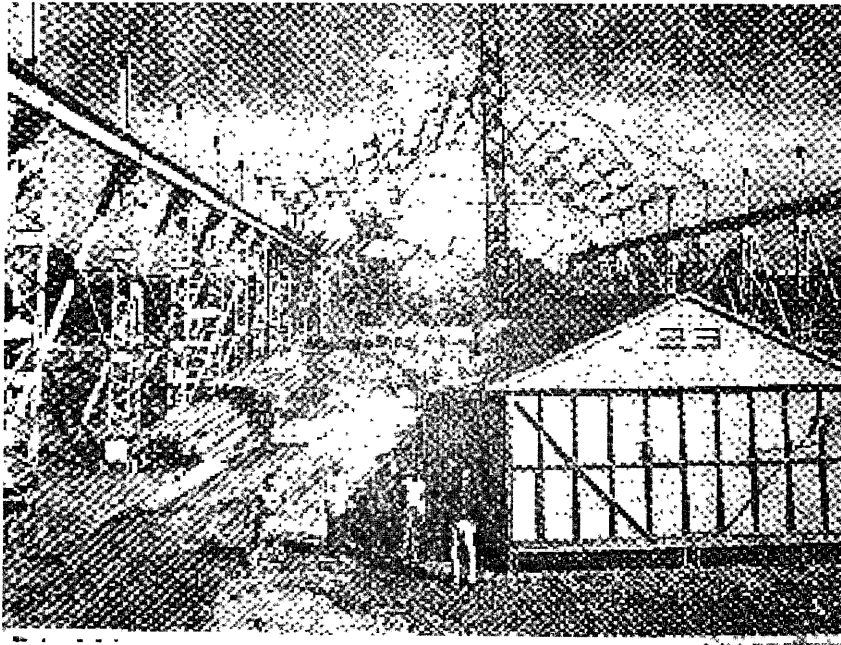


Figure 9-5. (Newspaper clipping from HAP scrapbook) One impatient property owner: Pacific Chain & Manufacturing company builds a warehouse “on top of” a Guild’s Lake Courts row house still being dismantled, *The Oregonian*, May 19, 1946. Courtesy of the City of Portland Archives.

Ironically for HAP, labor shortages became the weak link in the chain of industrialization. There were so many housing units being constructed at the same time that other units were being deconstructed and still others removed intact that there were not enough workers to do all the jobs. These citywide labor shortages put removal of the buildings at Guild’s Lake Courts behind schedule. The vacated twelve-acre Pacific Chain site at NW Yeon Avenue and St. Helens Road is certainly the oddest example of the consequences of this labor shortage as seen in Figure 9-5. It also shows how the industrial interests were working together to achieve their goals. The president of Pacific Chain had voluntarily delayed removal of housing units from its property adjacent to the Guam Community Center to allow units to be removed

from other industrial sites where removal was more urgent. This was an attempt to “slash delaying red tape with federal housing officials. At that time Guild’s Lake Housing had been earmarked for removal to alleviate the urgent need for veterans housing in other sections of the state.”⁵⁴ The idea was promoted to relocate housing dwellings to universities to function as dormitories at state universities in Oregon where many veterans were settling.

Relocation within the development became a quintessential African American experience. Housing options in 1946 were limited, with restrictive covenants still legal, along with redlining and other discriminatory housing practices, so that remaining in public housing was the most practical and, for many, the only option. On July 25, 1947, the HAP board met with the Guilds Lake Tenants League and Mayor Riley to discuss two issues of concern among African American residents: 1) segregation at the site and 2) vacant units not being filled. Mayor Riley favored *laissez-faire* economics, “disliked public intervention in the private economy, opposed public housing, and showed little interest in land-use planning.”⁵⁵ He was a third-generation Portlander with a strong segregationist spirit, yet he argued for native Portlanders to modify their standards in favor of “patriotism and wartime exigencies.”⁵⁶ These words lacked resolve, which was clearly demonstrated by the Mayor and City Councils actions following the racially charged shooting death of Mr. Erwin Jones in front of his children in his Guild’s Lake Courts apartment by Detective Bard Purcell, prior to the war’s end. The case never went to trial after two inquests and the City Council passed a motion to cover the legal expenses for the three officers

involved.⁵⁷ The police had entered the home at 4611 N.W. 44th Court in plain clothes, of an innocent man without a warrant and then failed to identify themselves as police.⁵⁸ The alarmed residents thought they were being burglarized at 2 A.M. as Purcell shot the father of five in the back in a self-described case of self-defense testifying that Mr Jones was firing at the other officers.⁵⁹

On January 8, 1948, Urban League members, supported by Father Thomas T. Tobin of the Portland Housing and Planning Association, advocated before HAP commissioners that HAP should make tenancy open to “the first tenant who applies for it.”⁶⁰ Mr. Freeman responded to defend his staff at the rental offices justifying the segregation at Guild’s Lake Courts and Vanport as a result of choice:

that such a practice was being carried on in tenant selection, and explained that prospective tenants are given information as to the location of each unit in full detail, that the vacant units are pointed out on maps and charts. Commissioner [Lamar] Tooze stated that a great deal of trouble has been caused in Portland in race relations by too much pressure being put forth in promoting racial problems. He believed a solution to the problem would have to come through education, and the Urban League should change its tactics and possibly become more effective in promoting its problems. He pointed out that by educating the Negroes to realize that their problems are the same as whites, the less the “pressure program” would be used. Commissioner Tooze said there had been no intentional discrimination by the Housing Authority of Portland, and that the segregation has been perfectly natural through the choice made by Negroes themselves, with regards to housing in certain areas of the project.... [Shelton] Hill, Industrial Secretary of the Urban League, “related his experience with the policy of integration of whites and Negroes in the Vancouver Housing projects, and that such integration was made there without any ill effects.”⁶¹

Harvey Phelps, treasurer of the Guilds Lake Tenants’ League, attended the meeting, but there was no record of him having given a statement. Phelps frequently expressed

concern about the 600 vacant units at Guild's Lake Courts being withheld from the rental market. The Guilds Lake Tenants' League, with 60 members, was concerned that the housing authority was not allowing new tenants into Guild's Lake Courts.⁶²

Phelps was a regular agitator at the bi-monthly HAP meetings in 1948 before the flood. The press reported that a HAP commissioner had tossed Phelps out of a meeting, although that is unsubstantiated in HAP meeting records. The tone at the next HAP meeting after the article had been published was agitated and at that meeting HAP commissioners chose to stop allowing public comment at regular meetings, demonstrating the general disdain HAP had for the public. The public that year included Phelps, his lawyer, and members of the Urban League who came to discuss integration of housing developments and the vacant units at Guild's Lake Courts.⁶³ The secretary recorded the tension between Phelps and the commissioners on February 5, 1948. HAP wanted clarity on Phelps' statements to the press regarding the claim that Dahlke had thrown Phelps out of a meeting. Phelps stated for the record that the meeting in question was the Senate Banking and Currency meeting and that Dahlke had made a "veiled threat"; Phelps had felt very unwelcome at all HAP meetings. After Phelps left the meeting room, the commissioners decided against public comment at meetings in order to stay on task, unless there was a meeting scheduled with the public and those would be noticed to parties of interest. Phelps continued to attend meetings.

The HAP Commission was increasingly defensive about the formal and verbal complaints made by the Guilds Lake Tenants League and the Urban League about

HAP's segregated areas at Guild's Lake Courts and Vanport and about unused vacant units. The commissioners felt that they had done more than was called for to assist African American tenants within HAP. They told the integration advocates that they should be grateful that there was still housing available, and it was the commissioners' efforts that had stopped the passage of the Cain Bill that would "have arbitrarily disposed of all war housing by December 1, 1948."⁶⁴ Additionally,

Commissioner Detloff stated that the tenants in Guild's Lake, as well as all other housing projects, must understand that the housing in question is temporary and there will be a systematic method of discontinuing the housing at sometime in the future. Mr. Freeman advised that at present there is nothing actively pending for industry in Guild's Lake.⁶⁵

Freeman's comment that there was nothing pending for industry since industry was in fact actively pursuing expansion plans.

Making Way for Veterans Moving In

In 1945, federal employees were stalling the industrialization schemes of HAP. Staff of the FPHA were in the process of inventorying the entire stock of HAP housing to see what could be used by veterans, before authorizing auctioning off the remaining surplus units. In 1948, housing within the HAP system became readily available to families of veterans. The federal government was planning for the impending relocation and reuse of units from various housing projects. For example, some of the relocated units became college housing in Eugene, Oregon, and at an undisclosed location in California as well as veteran's housing in the well documented Veteran's Colony in Salem, Oregon. The federal government's desire to reuse and

adapt defense housing was dimly viewed by increasingly agitated landowners who were threatening to evict the tenants of Guild's Lake Courts. The housing authority in fact had little choice but to delay further destruction of units because six months after the war ended all demolition was frozen by the FPHA.⁶⁶

White veterans were perceived as good tenants for public housing. HAP could have them occupy empty units, avoiding the pressure to integrate public housing. Veterans would, officials reasoned, avail themselves of the newly constructed homes as soon as private construction started to meet the high demand and not prevent progress at public housing sites because they would not require the housing for long periods of time. Guild's Lake Courts was never considered as a prime site to house veterans. In early 1945 the city of Portland projected that as many as 400 veterans a month were returning to Portland;⁶⁷ HAP wanted employment restrictions lifted so that any veteran could move into any HAP housing, even if he were not employed in a defense industry.

In November 1947, HAP's portfolio had 1,200 vacancies—they were available to veterans. Some HAP meeting attendees questioned why the vacancies were not being filled as veterans needed to be housed:

There are not as many people on the [HAP] waiting list as formerly and ... many of those on the waiting list are awaiting transfer to other projects. Dr. Schilt inquired regarding vacancies in the Guild's Lake Project and was advised that there are vacancies in Guild's Lake [Courts] but that the Authority is trying to open Guild's Lake [District] to industry in order to create more employment in Portland.⁶⁸

HAP Commissioner Moores found it distressing that “under present restrictions, a man who has been fighting in the South Pacific is not eligible for war housing.”⁶⁹ The members all agreed that this was unjust and formally requested that the National Housing Authority lift the ban. The general agreement of the commissioners was that the ban would soon be lifted, and that veteran tenants would be consolidated into the smaller, more livable projects (smaller developments), and that housing them in Vanport and University Homes would be a short-term solution until the housing market adjusted itself.⁷⁰ By November 15, 1945, one thousand families of military personnel and 500 families of returned veterans were housed in HAP units.⁷¹ HAP had four of these “livable projects” on desirable residential lands: Parkside Homes, Fir Court, Hudson Street Homes, and St. John’s Woods. The area cited as a priority for early disposition in 1946 was Guild’s Lake Courts. In 1947 however, the *Oregonian* reported that Mayor Riley’s committee on veterans’ housing proposed that 236 of the 392 deactivated units at Guild’s Lake Courts be reactivated.⁷² Certainly using Guild’s Lake Courts for veterans housing was not part of the HAP disposition plan.

The Guild’s Lake Courts site had already lost 518 units of the original 2,632 units (fig. from article 2,506, fig. from Rossman 2,606) and 1,820 of the units that were still standing were occupied. Demolition was moving slowly because the federal funds were not forthcoming, due to internal reorganization in the federal government. Deprogramming actions (requests to remove housing units once vacated) had been sent to the FPHA and NHA in the fall of 1946, only to be unanswered, and land lease fees remained unpaid. HAP’s requests floated for several months. During the HAP

board meeting of January 1947, the staff present responded that that these types of requests should have been sent to a Mr. English of the Civilian Production Administration (CPA), an agency created in April 1946. After some discussion, the Montgomery Ward representative declared that the company intended to submit an application for a permit to demolish all vacated units on its property to the CPA the next day.

Impact of Vanport Flood on Disposition of Temporary Units

James Clarence Crolley was a recent graduate of Roosevelt High School (class of 1947) and resident of Vanport until 1948 when he relocated to Guild's Lake Courts. During his interview, he described the day of the flood extensively.⁷³ He had been informed that the floodwaters were going to come over the dikes (berm) and had gone to watch the water rising before heading home for a meal. His family had been moving belongings upstairs, in his absence, at their home in Vanport because the adults were under the impression that the waters were only going to flood the first three feet of their dwelling. But witnesses reported seeing fifty-foot sprays of water after the rail-track berm gave out. The Vanport Flood was caused by excessive snowmelt filling the Columbia River floodplain. "At approximately 4:17PM the railroad dike gave way, and water suddenly burst through the dike [berm]. Within moments a ten-foot-high wall of water crashed into the city near Vanport College, while residents near Denver Avenue attempted to save their belongings."⁷⁴

Initially, victims of all colors were offered temporary shelter in schools, churches, and private homes. Before long, the African American flood victims were concentrated in the preexisting dormitories on Swan Island (empty dorms built for single African American shipyard workers that should never have been used for families) and the federal trailers placed at the site of Guild's Lake Courts. The trailers were not free: the evacuees had to pay rent. The first trailers brought to Guild's Lake Courts were only suitable for families of four; the later refurbished trailers that arrived in August could accommodate families with six members.⁷⁵ The Federal Works Agency covered the cost of obtaining and transporting the trailers; HAP refurbished these trailers, and at first they were going to charge \$28 a month, increasing to \$30 a month by the end of July 1948.⁷⁶ Those rents were still less than the rents for pre-existing housing units, which had only increased slightly, since the typical lease signed for \$46 a month (see Figure 5-5). Larger families, with as many as seven children, could not be accommodated in trailers and were given short-term shelter by HAP in homes pending demolition at Guild's Lake Courts and by the urban renewal agency in the Rose Quarter in homes left vacant by eminent domain. Whites had an easier time moving into private-market rental units, although the shortage of rental units forced many survivors, both white and African American, into Portland's other public housing communities. It seemed that the city's goodwill was short-lived.⁷⁷

According to an official City of Portland history of blacks in the community:

After the flood some former Vanport residents left and went back to their hometowns. Several former shipyard workers found employment with the Northern Pacific Railroad and found housing at the Guild's Lake housing

project, which was located in close proximity to the Northern Pacific rail yards. Since the 1920s the Guild's Lake area seemed appropriate for industrial expansion. Its location near explosive oil tanks and pressure from developers prompted the housing authority to close down the Guild's Lake housing project.⁷⁸



Figure 9-6. (photo) Aerial image taken in 1958 of Guild's Lake District. The area has been transformed into an industrial community with no homes left from Guild's Lake Courts. Courtesy of the City of Portland Archives.



Figure 9-7. (photo) Guild's Lake Courts row house relocated to Sauvie Island, 2003. Courtesy of Brandon Spencer-Hartle.

The 1951 HAP Annual Report stated that 344 families were still living in Guild's Lake Courts in November 1951. The report attributed the decrease in population in all HAP-managed "Lanham Act Housing" to three factors: family income too large, lack of defense work, and non-veteran families ineligible for admission.⁷⁹ The federal census of 1950 showed 1,541 African Americans living in the Guild's Lake District census tract. The last known image of people living in the Guild's Lake Courts community was a photograph of a truck/service van crash in *The Oregonian* in June 1950 (see Figure 9-8). After *The Oregonian's* initial interest in the demolition of the units in 1946, the issue of industry destroying Guild's Lake Courts curiously never reemerged as a point of contention in the local press after the flood of 1948. The race of the people in the photograph and accounts of former residents indicate that the Gona Street Community Center and the housing in that division was the last to be demolished. It is unclear what happened to these last residents to leave

the community, although many African American reunion attendees reported moving to other HAP developments after Guild's Lake Courts closed, which indicates that by 1950 HAP was allowing African Americans access to more housing sites than in the war years. Many units like the one in Figure 9-7 were relocated to provide affordable housing for farm workers elsewhere in the state and remained in use, "temporary housing" in name only.



Figure 9-8. (photo) Photo of a truck/service van crash on NW St. Helen's Road, which killed a pedestrian and came to rest at an occupied unit, #3683, at Guild's Lake Courts; a cropped version appeared in *The Oregonian*. The negative was labeled from the "black section of Guild's Lake." Image taken on June 22, 1950, by Allan deLay. Courtesy of Thomas Robinson.

Conclusion

Both Vanport and Guild's Lake Courts were built on flood plains on former marshland. The destruction of Vanport was an unexpected natural disaster made worse by inadequate planning and engineering. In contrast, the destruction of Guild's Lake Courts was a predetermined act of man. Vanport was fifteen feet below the level of the Columbia River. When the river rose rapidly on May 30, 1948, because of a rapid thaw, Vanport's manmade barriers were breached; a wall of water rushed in and swept away all the housing units.⁸⁰ There was no conscious plan to wipe Vanport off the map.

The demolition of the majority of the units at Guild's Lake Courts was premeditated from the development's inception. Because most of the land was leased, there was no recourse for pre-flood tenants or flood evacuees to advocate within the public housing system to remain in Guild's Lake Courts units. The exact location of the acres of land owned by HAP is unclear and might have been predominantly the land upon which the community centers were constructed. However, the destruction did not proceed according to a well-drafted, predictable plan. The erratic and patchy nature of the demolition of units can be attributed to the complexity of the landholdings as private owners' leases expired intermittently. At various points demolition was held up in the court system as various challenges occurred—from how particular units were being removed offsite to displeasure of a particular property owner over the federal government's failure to pay rent—but invariably the property owners wishing to redevelop or sell their landholdings triumphed, and the residents

were evicted. By 1951, Guild's Lake Courts had become as invisible as Vanport; unlike Vanport, it had also begun to disappear from popular memory.

The "community of helping hands" in defense housing faded away as the suburbs were expanding. The homefront camaraderie continued within the "electric units" until they were demolished in 1951 because that section had the least amount of postwar upheaval and the units offered the most privacy. Privacy might just be as important as unit size to the adaptability of public housing units to the life cycle of residents and communities. Divorce rates rose to unprecedented levels, affecting the family structure of households within public housing after the war; female-headed households increasingly made up the eligibility guidelines of those on the HAP waiting lists willing to occupy vacated units. The postwar private housing market, educational opportunities, and the historic record increasingly marginalized African Americans and female-headed white households.

¹ Todd Michney, "Constrained Communities: Black Cleveland's Experience with World War II Public Housing," *Journal of Social History* 40, no. 4 (2007): 933.

² Rudy Pearson, "African Americans in Portland, Oregon, 1940–1950: Living and Working Conditions—A Social History," unpublished dissertation, Washington State University (May 1996).

³ E. Kimbark MacColl, *The Growth of a City: Power Politics in Portland, Oregon, 1915–1950* (Portland, OR: Georgian Press, 1979), 584.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 598.

⁵ "Vacating of Housing Speeded at Guild's Lake," *The Oregonian*, May 10, 1949, p. 15. HAP files, A2001-025, City of Portland Archives.

⁶ Minutes of HAP Commission meeting, September 21, 1944, HAP files, A2001-025, City of Portland Archives.

⁷ Donald Lauinger, pre-interview questionnaire, filled out with help from his mother.

⁸ Donald Lauinger, interview by Tanya March, September 8, 2006, audio recording, Portland, OR.

⁹ Minutes of HAP Commission meeting, September 9, 1943, HAP files, A2001-025, City of Portland Archives.

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- ¹⁰ Minutes of HAP Commission meeting, October 4 and 15, 1945, HAP files, A2001-025, City of Portland Archives.
- ¹¹ “Proposed Purchase and Conversion of Guild’s Lake Project, ORE-35026,” minutes of HAP Commission meeting, March 23, 1943, HAP files, A2001-025, City of Portland Archives.
- ¹² Ibid.
- ¹³ Ibid.
- ¹⁴ MacColl, *The Growth of a City*, 580.
- ¹⁵ Minutes of HAP Commission meeting, March 23, 1943, HAP files, A2001-025, City of Portland Archives.
- ¹⁶ Richard Sanders, *Glimpses from the Past: The Housing Authority of Portland: Fifty Years of Building a Better Community* (Portland, OR: Housing Authority of Portland, 1991), 121.
- ¹⁷ Minutes of HAP Commission meeting, March 23, 1943, HAP files, A2001-025, City of Portland Archives.
- ¹⁸ “History Project 1946,” HAP files, A2001-025/0605-01, City of Portland Archives.
- ¹⁹ Jewel Lansing, *Portland: People, Politics, and Power 1851–2001* (Corvallis, OR: Oregon State University Press, 2003), 344.
- ²⁰ Minutes of HAP Commission meeting, July 25, 1944, HAP files, A2001-025, City of Portland Archives.
- ²¹ Terence O’Donnell and Thomas Vaughn, *Portland: An Informal History and Guide* (Portland, OR: Western Imprints, 1984), 66.
- ²² Minutes of HAP Commission meeting, September 9, 1943, HAP files, A2001-025, City of Portland Archives.
- ²³ MacColl. *The Growth of a City*, 588.
- ²⁴ Ibid., 587.
- ²⁵ Minutes of HAP Commission meeting, July 5, 1945, HAP files, A2001-025, City of Portland Archives.
- ²⁶ Minutes of HAP Commission meeting, October 18, 1945, HAP files, A2001-025, City of Portland Archives.
- ²⁷ “Three Postwar Industries Buy Guild’s Lake Sites,” *The Oregonian*, October 31, 1945, p. 13. HAP Scrapbook, A2001-025, City of Portland Archives.
- ²⁸ “Soap Factory to Require 3 buildings,” *Daily Journal of Commerce*, November 1, 1945, HAP Scrapbook, A2001-025, City of Portland Archives; “3 Concerns Buy Tracts at U.S. Site: Early Removal of Guild’s Lake Houses Sought,” *The Oregonian*, October 31, 1945, p. 1. HAP Scrapbook, A2001-025, City of Portland Archives.
- ²⁹ Cynthia Henthorn, *From Submarines to Suburbs: Selling a Better America, 1939–1959* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2006), 124.
- ³⁰ Arnold Leppert, interview by Tanya March, April 24, 2007, audio recording, Portland, OR.
- ³¹ Henthorn, *From Submarines to Suburbs*, 205–206.
- ³² Ibid., 130–131, 206.
- ³³ Dale Butler, interview by Tanya March, March 24, 2007, audio recording, Portland, OR.
- ³⁴ “Newspaper Publicity,” Minutes of HAP commission meeting, May 17, 1945, HAP files, City of Portland Archives.
- ³⁵ Ibid.
- ³⁶ “Proposal of Central Company,” Minutes of HAP Commission meeting, September 20, 1945, HAP files, City of Portland Archives.
- ³⁷ Bureau of Planning, *The History of Portland’s African American Community (1805–Present)* (Portland: City of Portland, 1993), 67.
- ³⁸ Sanders, *Glimpses from the Past*, 119.
- ³⁹ MacColl, *The Growth of a City*, 578.
- ⁴⁰ Minutes of HAP Commission meeting, February 21, 1946, HAP files, City of Portland Archives.

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- ⁴¹ Minutes of HAP Commission, July 5, 1945, HAP files, City of Portland Archives.
- ⁴² Andrew Wiese, *Places of Their Own: African American Suburbanization in the Twentieth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 135.
- ⁴³ Minutes of HAP Commission meeting, October 3 and 18, November 1, 1945, HAP files, City of Portland Archives.
- ⁴⁴ Information Division Report, April ____, 1945, HAP files, City of Portland Archives. [Add day, check year].
- ⁴⁵ Gene W. Rossman, *History of the Housing Authority of Portland, OR, 1941–1973* (Portland, OR: Oregon Historical Society [MSS 1431], c. 1973), Exhibit IV, 51.
- ⁴⁶ Minutes of HAP commission meeting, October 4, 1945, HAP files, A2001-025, City of Portland Archives.
- ⁴⁷ This site was distinctly isolated by chain fences and is on prime real estate on the edge of today's industrial area. This landholding today is part of a current proposed residential community by Conway that would feed directly into "trendy" NW 23rd Avenue. That a freight shipping company like Conway is willing to become a developer can be attributed to the early twenty-first-century real estate boom; in the current bust they may choose to not change current site conditions without public funding like urban renewal.
- ⁴⁸ "Guild's Tenants Get Priority Should They Have to Move," *The Oregonian*, April 10, 1947, HAP scrapbook, A2001-025, City of Portland Archives.
- ⁴⁹ Minutes Mayor's Office Meeting, March 27, 1946, HAP files, A2001-025, City of Portland Archives.
- ⁵⁰ Lansing, *Portland*, 345.
- ⁵¹ "Correspondence" letter, Minutes, April 3, 1947, HAP files, A2001-025, City of Portland Archives.
- ⁵² "Invitation for Bids for Demolition Contract," *Daily Journal of Commerce*, April 11, 1947, HAP scrapbook, A2001-025, City of Portland Archives.
- ⁵³ Minutes of HAP commission meeting, January 14, 1946, HAP files, A2001-025, City of Portland Archives.
- ⁵⁴ "Plant States over Houses: Chain Firm Builds at Guild's Lake," *The Sunday Oregonian*, May 19, 1946, p. 2. HAP scrapbook, A2001-025, City of Portland Archives.
- ⁵⁵ Carl Abbott, *Portland—Gateway to the Northwest* (Northridge, CA: Windsor Publications, 1997), 119.
- ⁵⁶ Lansing, *Portland*, 343.
- ⁵⁷ "Citizens Protest City Council Action," *The Observer*, October 31, 1945, p. 1.
- ⁵⁸ "Inquest Jury Hears How Negro Died in Police Raid," *The Oregonian*, October 10, 1945, p. 1.
- ⁵⁹ "City to Probe Negro's Death," *The Oregonian*, September 8, 1945, p. 7.
- ⁶⁰ Minutes of HAP Commission meeting, January 8, 1948, HAP files, A2001-025, City of Portland Archives.
- ⁶¹ *Ibid.*
- ⁶² "Harvey Phelps, Guild's Lake Tenants' League," Minutes of HAP Commission meeting, March 4, 1948, HAP files, A2001-025, City of Portland Archives.
- ⁶³ Minutes of HAP Commission meeting, February 5, 1948, HAP files, City of Portland Archives.
- ⁶⁴ *Ibid.*
- ⁶⁵ *Ibid.*
- ⁶⁶ FPHA, "Freeze Order on Demolition of War Housing," December 6, 1945, HAP Scrapbook, A2001-025, City of Portland Archives.
- ⁶⁷ "Housing for Returned War Veterans," Minutes of HAP Commission meeting, March 15, 1945, A2001-025, City of Portland Archives.
- ⁶⁸ Minutes of HAP Commission pre-meeting, November 6, 1947, HAP files, A2001-025, City of Portland Archives.
- ⁶⁹ Letter to Mr. Frank M. Crutsinger Regional Director of FPHA, minutes of HAP Commission meeting, March 15, 1945, HAP files, A2001-025, City of Portland Archives.

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- ⁷⁰ Minutes of HAP Commission meeting, "Vacating War Housing Units," October 4, 1945, HAP files, A2001-025, City of Portland Archives.
- ⁷¹ Letter to the Advisory Committee on Temporary Housing, signed by Chester A. Moores, November 15, 1945. Folder 0605-08-2/6 17-06 22/2, Box 3, HAP files, A2001-025, City of Portland Archives.
- ⁷² "Reactivating 236 Units Proposed to Furnish Homes for Veterans," *The Oregonian*, January 5, 1947, p. 20. HAP scrapbook, City of Portland Archives.
- ⁷³ James Clarence Crolley, interview. *First Guild's Lake Courts Reunion Held at McMenamin's Tavern and Pool*, DVD (2007; Portland, OR).
- ⁷⁴ "The Flood: Floating 'like Corks,'" *Center for Columbia River History*, 2006, <http://www.ccrh.org/comm/slough/vpflood.php> (accessed May 24, 2009).
- ⁷⁵ Minutes of HAP Commission meeting, August 5, 1948, June 1, 1945–November 30, 1947, HAP files, A2001-025, Record Series 0605-08, City of Portland Archives.
- ⁷⁶ Minutes of HAP Commission meeting, July 1 and 15, 1948, HAP files, A2001-025, City of Portland Archives.
- ⁷⁷ Pearson, "African Americans in Portland," 216.
- ⁷⁸ Bureau of Planning, *The History of Portland's Black Community*.
- ⁷⁹ HAP Annual Report, 1951. Box 3, HAP files, 0605-02, A2001-025, City of Portland Archives.
- ⁸⁰ Manly Maben, *Vanport* (Portland, OR: Oregon Historical Society Press, 1987), 106.

CHAPTER 10:

CONCLUSION:

WHY IS IT HARD TO FIND ANYONE WHO HAS HEARD OF GUILD'S LAKE COURTS?

I find this interesting, but it does make for suspicion of history as a record of reality. I thought of these things as I read the historical markers across the country, thought about how the myth wipes out the fact. On a very low level the following is the process of a myth. Visiting in the town where I was born, I talked with a very old man who had known me as a child. He remembered vividly seeing me, a peaked, shivering child walking past his house one freezing morning, my inadequate overcoat fastened across my little chest with horse-blanket pins. This in its small way is the stuff of myths—the poor suffering child who rises to glory, on a limited scale or course. Even though I didn't remember the episode, I knew it could not be true. My mother was a passionate sewer-on of buttons. A button off was more than sloppiness; it was a sin.

—John Steinbeck's *Travels with Charley: in Search of America*¹

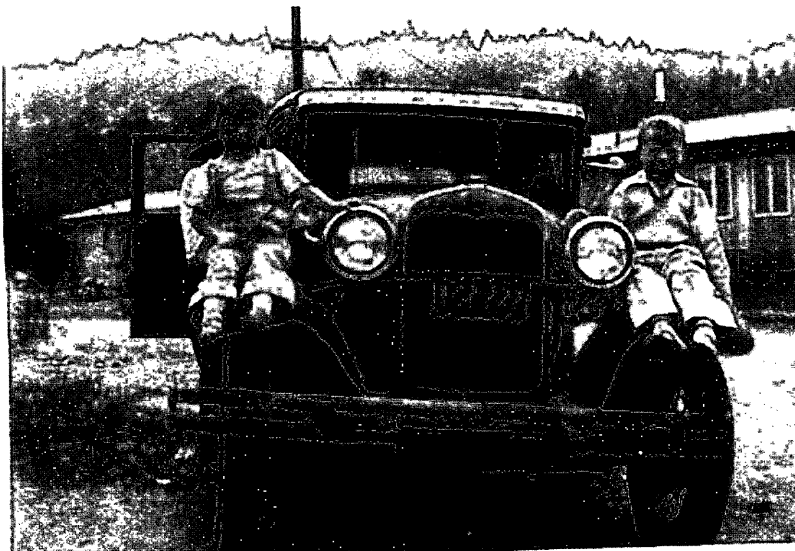


Figure 10-1. (photo) Always on the move, two boys on car. Courtesy of Eldon Rose.

No historic signs mark the site of Guild's Lake Courts. With no well-known story or current history to confirm or direct me, I had a clean slate to answer my questions: What it was like to live in wartime housing? How did this community in practice deviate from the planned vision? How did individuals, policies, and historic events act to shape the community over time? E. K. McCall's *The Growth of a City* is the only readily available account, but it is rarely given a straight read and is now out of print. Yet John Steinbeck's suspicion of memory as a record of reality of his own childhood still haunts me. The recollections of Guild's Lake Courts were gathered from the memories of childhood. These recollections, like those of the buttons on Steinbeck's winter coat, were not always consistent, and my role as an urban historian was to verify sources and follow up on leads. One of the great things was that there was no rehearsed history. I can only image that Steinbeck was not the first person to hear the tale of the impoverished roots of the famed hometown hero. Guild's Lake Courts residents, unlike former residents of Vanport, had no well-polished dialog sharpened and adapted after decades of memory sharing. Instead, memories were unrehearsed and interviewees expressed a sense of relief that someone finally wanted to hear about Guild's Lake Courts. Indeed, I received many post-interview communications pressing me to finish my writing and share their stories and images.

Twice in the last century, temporary cities have been erected in the neighborhood now known as the Guild's Lake Industrial District. Neither the Lewis & Clark Centennial Exposition of 1905 nor the war housing of 1942 was ever intended to last. The Fair and the defense housing were both transitory developments that

provided landowners with some short-term capital gains and infrastructure development preceding the industrial expansion along the river and railroad spur construction became feasible. The residents of Portland have long taken pride in the past glory of the temporary City of Lights that enticed investors west. The unique nature of the Guild's Lake Courts community is also worthy of pride. Its residents—enough to create the fourteenth largest city in the state, had the Guild's Lake Courts development been incorporated—arrived, and many established roots and made sizable contributions to Portland's evolution.

The modern boosters who applaud Portland's planning successes have likely never learned about Guild's Lake Courts. The memory of the housing was forgotten, and the memory of racial tensions and Jim Crow conditions has only just recently been reopened. Perhaps old wounds are easier to explore once the generation that lived with them has passed on. These individuals learned to like Portland, became contributors, and had a positive social impact. Even the one sign that was installed during construction seemed to have been dwarfed. While the city with all its segments was intentionally identifiable as a congruent whole, the very lack of infrastructure assured the community's transitory nature. Even the fire station on St. Helen's Road was just a civil defense fire station with a green civil defense truck. Like the structures, the "fire engine" was situated only for an undetermined wartime trajectory.

No polarizing effort to save Guild's Lake Courts was uncovered and the civil rights efforts at Guild's Lake Courts were sporadic. Harvey Phelps' and the Urban League's hard work to end segregation and increase voter participation at Guild's

Lake Courts was stopped in its tracks by the Vanport Flood. African Americans were now able to rent within the white section but instead of this being an empowering experience of increased equity, the unforeseen relocation of dwellings left residents traumatized, marginalized and terminal. The tensions between Portland's pre-war African American community and the new arrivals prohibited a unified minority civic force to combat Portland's racist powerbase, as was demonstrated most clearly by the Jones case when the two factions failed to rally behind Jones's widow. Because so few adults remain that might have been members of the Guild's Lake Tenants Association and no files of this organization were archived, there are two possibilities: 1) it was not a group that represented a significant number of members or 2) they failed in their efforts and the housing project was short-lived so no files were considered worth saving. There were not victories for public housing residents to save for prosperity and "losers" don't write the history. The Housing Authority of Portland at critical points wrote the official history of 1940s public housing in Portland. That the Squires scrapbook survived with the leases and classified ad seeking their runaway children is a rare oddity but certainly not a story of success, only a shadow of an animated tenant struggle.

A few street names and a stretch of sidewalk are all that remain of the site of Guild's Lake Courts. The original planners of the public housing community named streets for early World War II battles when they platted the site. Does anyone today wonder why his business in NW Portland is on a street named after a location in New Guinea or the Philippines? Gona and Buna streets commemorated the Pacific battle of

Buna-Gona, which ended in December 1942. And Tunis, a city in Tunisia where some of the first major operations of the United States occurred in 1942–1943; Manila, the capital of the Philippines; and Wake and Guam, named for islands. Luzon and Guam streets remain, but, like the housing itself, their cognitive meaning has been forgotten. It has been sixty years since the housing units were demolished or auctioned off and relocated intact or in pieces; no structure remains onsite to trigger a memory of the housing, and the names have lost their context.

Vanport has not been forgotten. Also built in 1942, Vanport overshadows Guild's Lake Courts with its immense scale and more grandiose streets, such as Victory Boulevard. Although Vanport lands have never been redeveloped, I would argue that had the former lands of Guild's Lake Courts been left undeveloped, public memory would still connect the ear to the vision of John L. Olmsted Jr. and the Lewis & Clark Fair, not to swaths of worker housing. Consider Vanport and the *Titanic*. Both are remembered as massive, manmade accomplishments and engineering triumphs that failed to stand against the forces of nature. Who remembers the *Titanic*'s sister ships, the *Olympic* or the *Britannic*? In many ways, Guild's Lake Courts is like the *Olympic*, nicknamed "Old Reliable." They both served their purposes and then were demolished and auctioned off.

The manifestation of class conflict was a recurring narrative in the conversations with former residents. Housing units built under the USHA had to comply with the financial limitations created by the Byard Amendment; this directly resulted in smaller unit sizes and austere designs of units situated on bleak landscapes.

These limitations were acceptable during the war years as all nonessentials were shunned. Americans were committed to winning the war; focus on the inequities of segregation was derided as divisive. New Deal housing was built for the middle class, and thus housing scholars forget that war housing was multi-class. The issues of race and class are interdependent in public housing; I argue that the shift to affordable housing happened in public housing in postwar 1940s because two classes of residents were discriminated against in the private market: African Americans and women-headed households.

The social environment at Guild's Lake Courts during the war years was focused abroad on battles in foreign lands. Children, who were able to congregate in vast numbers with very limited oversight, deviated from the Portland norm of racial and class exclusion and for a short time lived in what was for these pre-teens an urban utopia. Their memories survived despite that fact that the community failed to; competing stories eradicated the community memory, and the property holders and civic leaders deliberately allowed the housing to be demolished and stifled public criticism.

After the war, those who could took advantage of FHA loans and bought homes. Those more mobile residents were replaced by single mothers just as women and African Americans who needed to work lost access to the high-paying manufacturing jobs. Displaced by the labor market and discriminated in the housing market, their only refuge was public housing. This shift to "affordable" housing in 1945 happened inadvertently, not because of official mandates. Single mothers

replaced two-parent families just as the daycare centers they relied on most started shutting down. Once income caps were established by HAP, the remaining residents with stable incomes who had vested in their community were required to relocate out of HAP housing, mandating a diaspora that had been occurring naturally.



Figure 10-2. (photo) On the steps of a home at Guild's Lake Courts. Left to right: David Wakman, dog Curly, Judy Larson (Kelly) holding dog Mike, Durwood Mekel, John Creswell, and long-legged Wade Halbrook (he was 6'8" when he graduated from Guild's Lake School). Courtesy of Beverly Braaten.

Without the extensive oral histories and reunion recollections gathered for this project, there would only be a fragmented history to draw upon. In fact, there were many more people who would have liked to have been involved in preserving this community history after I stopped interviewing, people who shared images like that in Figure 10-2.

Guild's Lake Courts had a hometown hero, because of his own struggles with class and the status quo in Portland. His "quest" and notoriety (transformation from freaky tall to starlight), which was followed by residents even after they were relocated, was to succeed at a sport—basketball—with which he had had no previous experience. Harvey Wade "Swede" Halbrook, who had an important career in the National Basketball Association in the 1950s, is pictured in Figure 10-2 with his friends. I met pro-baseball player Milo Meskel's sister for the first time at the third Guild's Lake Courts reunion in 2009.

Beverly Meskel: We all had fun down there. Everybody was friends—didn't matter where you came from, you were all broke. We didn't have anywhere to go.... We came from Minnesota where my dad made a dollar a day. If we didn't live on a farm, we all would have starved to death.... Swede Halbrook, well, if you lived in Guild's Lake [Courts], everyone knew Swede Halbrook. Well, in the fifth grade I stood about this high [motioning short] and Swede stood about this high [motioning tall]. And my brother-in-law's dad used to say you two should get married so your kids would be the right size. He was quite a guy. I think there were...four guys [brothers]—Joe, Dan, and Jim and him, I think.

Joe: They were all tall.

Beverly Meskel: They were all tall, but Swede also had a gland problem. We almost lost him in sixth grade; he was up at Oregon Health Science for a long time.

Joe: Halbrook was in my class at Chapman.

Beverly Meskel: Was he? So, like I said, he was not that well of a person. Plus he tried so much to have friends that he did not know who his friends were and who were the users. He got himself in quite a bit of trouble... He was a neat kid, really.

Wade Halbrook is just what Steinbeck meant when he talked of the myth of the poor, suffering child who rises to glory. Swede, pictured above with his long legs and enormous shoes, became a man of mythical proportions, who, at 7'3", was the tallest player ever to play for Oregon State College. He was even larger than life when he

lived at Guild's Lake Courts, but he never played basketball there because there was only one hoop in the entire development, and that was inside a mixed-use room in the Guild's Lake School.

According to the OSU Alumni association website: "He came to Lincoln [High] as a sophomore, having transferred from out-of-state. His first day was traumatic. He was talking about transferring to Benson because he thought the girls were laughing at him.... Then there was the media. It is difficult to comprehend today the attention Halbrook attracted. There was no television, unfortunately, but TV wasn't needed for him to become a household name throughout Oregon."² There were newsreels to inform listeners about his life at the university, where he had to push two beds together to sleep at night and could use the room's ceiling light as a shelf.³ This myth about Swede's desire to attend an all-boys school to avoid girls first appears in an article by Gerald Astor in *Sports Illustrated* on Valentine's Day of 1955, "A Matter of Size: Life Is a Problem When You're as Tall as Wade Halbrook."

Actually, Halbrook transferred to Lincoln High from Guild's Lake School. He did not make the Lincoln team basketball as a freshman because he had never played the game until he was spotted going home to Guild's Lake Courts on the streetcar in eighth grade. He went on to play center for Lincoln and was pictured in *Life* magazine in 1954. Many of his friends at Guild's Lake Courts were at Benson, and his accent and stature set him apart in a way that he never adjusted to, despite his success in helping Lincoln win the state championship in 1952. "When he entered Lincoln High School, he was so uncomfortable that he considered transferring to an all-boys'

school. Then he got his first opportunity to turn jeers into cheers. ‘He had nothing to tie him to the school at the time,’ says Coach Jimmy Partlow of Lincoln. ‘Ultimately basketball gave him the tie.’”⁴ *Life* magazine left open the roots of his discomfort, and size was certainly a contributing factor, but the “afraid of girls” myth ignores how the fear of upper-class students and the lack of childhood friends at Lincoln were equally disquieting for the young man. He could not stay focused and dropped out college and later out of the sport after being known as one of the few men large enough to guard Wilt Chamberlain (retiring in 1962). He was found dead on a city bus in Portland in 1988. Forgotten was how he grew up in Portland at Guild’s Lake Courts, and to attend Lincoln separated him from his friends. He, like others, had to relocate when Guild’s Lake Courts was dismantled. It is not just race history that has been erased; he was a gifted white youth who was unable to adjust to life under the spotlight.

I was less interested in the sporting debates that live on regarding the relative merits of Swede Halbrook and Wilt Chamberlain; instead, I wanted to try to understand his early years in Portland. In addition to the picture and the recollections of his old playmates, HAP also documented that Wade Halbrook was still living in Guild’s Lake Courts in 1951. The September 1, 1951, resident survey of HAP found an average of 3.96 residents per unit at Guild’s Lake Courts, including “4 pairs of twins and a number of large families, one teenage boy 7’2.5”, quite a number of children in upper age group.”⁵ Just where all these people went when Guild’s Lake Courts was closed was not tracked by HAP.

The efforts to explore race in a segregated housing project would be less thought-provoking had residents not come together to share their stories with each other at the reunions, which were not part of the original research design. Having first-hand accounts increased the capacity to understand just what made Guild's Lake Courts a progressive and fondly remembered home for many of the interviewees. Gathering testimonies from Vanport Flood survivors regarding their experience in the row houses and trailer homes at Guild's Lake Courts expanded the Vanport narrative as well. Without the eyewitness accounts, the cultural and social history that developed within the context of institutional and design history would have been very speculative.

Many times I was asked to redirect my scholarship to Vanport by people responding to my classified ads. It was very interesting that some who had lived at Guild's Lake Courts expressed a degree of shyness to talk about the community, feeling that the real story of public housing in wartime Portland was Vanport. The community trauma of the Vanport Flood of May 1948 inhibited people from even talking to me about Guild's Lake Courts, despite my expressed avid interest. For some individuals, being interviewed was transformative, and they started sharing their memories more vocally with others outside the context of this project.

My hope is that this story can help teach the consequences of indifference and also show that, despite its failings, public housing offered great advantages to its residents and had the potential to offer safe, affordable communities. The excerpts from the interviews are windows into everyday life, and the citations from archival

sources are windows into the larger picture of community planning. Together, they have helped to bring back the forgotten community, the memory of ordinary people living in public housing. Together, they illuminate the historic context of living in a wartime booming city, and ground the scope and impact of federal housing polices on individuals and their families in an understanding of everyday life at the time. In the process an obligation emerged to save the history as the only remaining legacy of the second largest residential community ever built in Portland.

¹ John Steinbeck, *Travels with Charley: In Search of America* (New York, NY: Penguin, 1962), 81.

² "Up Close and Personal: Tallest Beaver Ever," *OSU Alumni Association*, <http://www.osualum.com/s/359/index.aspx?sid=359&gid=1&pgid=502> (accessed Feb. 8, 2010).

³ "Wilt's No Competition: 7'3" Harvey Halbrook," *NBA TV*, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xyi1b7MZq4o> (accessed Feb. 8, 2010).

⁴ Gerald Astor, "A Matter of Size: Life Is a Problem When You're as Tall as Wade Halbrook," *Sports Illustrated*, Feb. 14, 1955, <http://sportsillustrated.cnn.com/vault/article/magazine/MAG1146331/index.htm> (accessed Feb 8, 2010).

⁵ "We asked for it!" Housing Authority of the City of Portland, 1951. Survey of residents in the 4,300 units still operating, survey completed in September 1951, HAP files, Portland City Archives, Portland, OR. It was a door-to-door survey.

GLOSSARY

Black Molly: Police car.

Community Facilities Act: See Lanham Act.

Defense Housing: Public housing built often by the government prior to United States entering World War II. Housing and trailers built after Pearl Harbor, for use by defense workers, continued to be referred to as defense housing.

Defense Phase: 1940; housing built by local housing authorities for defense centers building war supplies for Allies of the United States.

Disposition Phase: 1945; time when federal government first encouraged local housing authorities to privatize public housing built as temporary housing.

Electric Units: In many defense housing communities, the first units built had more electricity than other units at the same location.

Filtering: The term “filtering” has been used to refer both to life-cycle processes of housing units (changes in their price, or quality, or income level of occupant) and to life-cycle processes of households (changes in the quality of their housing that result from changes in the real housing prices they face or in their real income levels). Empirical analyses of filtering typically have focused on one of these indicators of change. For example, decline of housing price (Lowry, 1960), turnover of dwellings through “vacancy chains” (Kristof, 1965), or the mobility of individual households through the stock (Myers, 1975). Whatever the focus, rigorous filtering analysis necessarily involves a (perhaps implicit) partitioning of the housing market into several distinct segments, among which households and existing dwellings move in interplay with new construction.

Fruit and Flower: Philanthropic organization in Portland going back over 100 years.

Grade School: Common name for elementary schools, typically first through eighth grades.

Guild’s Lake District: Geographical reference that transcends time.

Guild’s Lake Courts: War housing that was built rapidly in Northwest Portland near where Montgomery Park stands today.

Kaiser Specials: Trains paid for by Kaiser filled with new hires from New York City.

Kaiserville: Vanport, the largest defense housing project ever built.

Kerr's plan: The idea to use force to leverage the funds needed to complete the filling in of Guild's Lake.

Kindergarten: Care for children ages 3–6 years old, potty trained but too young for traditional grade school; most schools in Portland had not offered this prior to 1942. Kindergarten was designed initially to be a transition from home to formal educational setting and is still not compulsory in all states. Compulsory education was formalized in the 1950s.

Knothole Club: Free membership group advertised on Kilpatrick's bread; the membership card received in the mail enabled children to see the Portland Beavers for free on Thursdays during the regular baseball season.

Lanham Act: The Lanham Act of 1940 authorized the use of federal funds to build public housing communities exclusively for defense industry workers. Most funds were spent in urban areas.

Negro Project: Nickname for Vanport, first recorded use on May 18, 1944. Chairman Gartrell of the Housing Authority of Portland "pointed out that Vanport City was rapidly becoming known as a Negro project, which rumor should be stopped." Board member Nickerson suggested employing "more colored policemen on the project." The board approved the hiring of men of color to the sheriff's staff at Vanport (there was no mention of Guild's Lake Courts in the meeting minutes).

Nursery School: Typically had infirmary rooms; the war-working mother can devote all her thoughts to the job, knowing that her child will be kept busy and happy during the day.

Permanent, family-type: Federal public housing built during WWII and intended to remain in use as housing in the same site postwar.

Redlining: Occurs in housing when financing and insurance is denied to property owners and homeowners because of the location of the housing; when banks target specific neighborhoods to be avoided and these areas are underserved, resulting in a self-fulfilling prophecy of decline. Initially enumerators working for the federal government targeted neighborhoods, determining that clusters of minorities, renters and multiuse structures would be unwise for federal loan guarantees.

Shipbuilder's Helper: Maritime industry job title used by the International Brotherhood of Boilermaker's Union; they help build, repair, and outfit ships. Other job titles for more specialized tasks in wartime shipbuilding included painters, welders, tool and die makers, patternmakers, coremakers, pipe fitters, and boilermakers.

Slabtown: Neighborhood in Northwest Portland where, because of the proximity to timber milling, residents would purchase large amounts of low-quality wood cuts from the exterior of the round for heating and cooking. Once delivered, the slab wood stacks were often so tall that they dominated the streetscapes. The neighborhood is on the flats of the northern end of Nob Hill and trendy 23rd in Portland—the name for the community has returned to use in recent years by residents but not realtors.

The Sunshine Division: Humanitarian effort started in 1923 by the Portland Police that typically aids poor families with food and clothing assistance.

Temporary Housing: The policymakers knew that in reality “temporary” is an ethereal term in housing; typically, except for policy, the distinction between permanent and temporary Defense-era housing built by the federal government was that the temporary housing was unfinished (for example, lacking foundation, siding etc.).

Trailer Housing: Movable homes on wheels built in factories and shipped across the United States to provide temporary housing for workers in war industries.

Vanport City: I have tried to avoid confusion by only refereeing to Vanport as “Vanport City” when using HAP records that truly delineated between “Vanport City” and “East Vanport”. This distinction between these two communities has fallen out of use and was only a bureaucratic distinction.

Victory Garden: Part of daily life on the homefront in both WWI and WWII, vegetable gardens were maintained in homes and in public parks to reduce dependence on farms because the agricultural labor force was serving in the military and in the defense industry.

Victory Housing: Term used by the architectural firm of Morris Whitehouse.

War Phase: February 1942; term coined by Kristin M. Szylvian to divide up the WWII housing program in the United States into three distinct periods. She fails to define the date in which this phase terminates, presumably when the war with Japan was concluded.

War Stamps: The War Savings Stamp (WSS) program was a fundraising tool used by the United States Treasury and directed at children; the sale of bonds was aimed at adults. Stamps were available in denominations of 5, 10, 25 and 50 cents and 1 and 5 dollars and did not provide interest. Children’s collections of stamps could be redeemed for war bonds (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/War_savings_stamps). Stamps were acquired from post offices and sold in schools to students. Albums and patriotic materials were made available to schools to promote the program (www.investor-dictionary.com/definition/savings+stamps.aspx).

Welder Bees: A nickname for women working as welders in the shipyards. Women's labor was critical for World War II defense industries. Wendy the Welder did not catch on as well in the public image as Rosie the Riveter, but both war-effort characters were part of poster campaigns to encourage women to enter the workforce.

106 Review: A report documenting a historic structure as is mandated by Section 106 of the 1966 National Historic Preservation Act, triggered if federal funds are involved and what impact, if any, will occur to the historic property. The process calls for documentation of any structure over fifty years old that is on the National Register of Historic places or that might be eligible for listing, as concurred by the State Historic Preservation Office or Tribal Historic Preservation Officer.

ABBREVIATIONS

CPA	Civilian Production Administration
EFC	U.S. Shipping Board Emergency Fleet Corporation
FPHA	Federal Public Housing Authority
FSA	Farm Security Administration (formerly the Resettlement Administration)
FWA	Federal Works Agency
HAP	Housing Authority of Portland
HUD	Housing and Urban Development
MAC	Multnomah Amateur Athletic Club
NPS	National Park Service
NIRA	National Industrial Recovery Act
NRHP	National Register of Historic Places
OHS	Oregon Historical Society
PBR	Food Center (unknown; perhaps the initials of the owner's name)
PHA	Portland Housing Association
PPS	Portland Public Schools
PP&R	Portland Parks and Recreation
PWA	Public Works Administration
REA	Rural Electrification Administration
TRAP	Treasury Relief Art Project
USHA	United States Housing Authority
USHC	U.S. Housing Corporation
VHA	Vancouver Housing Authority
WPA	Works Progress Administration

WSS War Savings Stamp (Victory Stamps)

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APPENDIX A:

METHODOLOGY

Planning

The formal methodology used by historic preservationists to explore the history of public housing has focused on site visits and archival records. Researchers trained in history and historic preservation in the last decade have increasingly used oral histories to gather details about life in public housing developments as they underwent demolition as part of Section 106 review mediation efforts. Even though the Housing Authority of Portland operated more defense housing units than any other housing authority in the nation, there are no housing units still standing onsite at any of the developments built in the 1940s. The document “Public Housing in the United States 1933–1949” was completed in 1999 to assist efforts in evaluating public housing communities, but any efforts to formalize the report as an accessible National Register Bulletin languished. This draft report and a number of the published Bulletins were used to develop this methodology. Two key National Register Bulletins¹ were used: #39 *Researching a Historic Property* by Eleanor O’Donnell, 1998, and *Historic Residential Suburbs: Guidelines for Evaluation and Documentation for the National Register of Historic Places* by David L. Ames and Linda Flint McClelland, 2002. As the site has been razed, there was no potential that the property possessed any physical features that could convey the Defense-era history with which it was associated. The effort was not limited to the war years. Instead the effort was divided over three eras of significance that occurred in a short period of time to gather details on three distinct

historic phases at the site: 1) Defense-era housing, 2) low-income housing, and 3) evacuee housing.

The lack of any preserved structural traces and the reliance on memories were the greatest challenges. Archival material accounts of race were limited to crisis management situations (murder, complaint by tenant organization, crime rate concerns). Typically the Housing Authority was concerned over the tarnishing of the public image of the housing within Portland. Starting in 1942, the use of promotional materials was designed to foster an idealized image of the housing in order to attract residents. By 1946, industrial boosters sought the transformation of the community's "public" image by changing the narrative in order to advocate for the demolition of the same community. In reconstructing the narrative, the two extremes required moderation. Individuals' memories, gleaned through face-to-face interviews, further challenged the reliability of printed media sources.

Section 106 mediation is intended to preserve a permanent record of the history of a property being demolished that is owned by the federal government or that is being redeveloped using federal funds. Since preservation of properties is not required, the intent is to save a record of the property for future generations. The basic steps of the Section 106 review process have resulted in a number of oral history projects, including many for defense housing demolished under the HOPE VI program. The methods used by historians in these projects to enroll participants / interviewees could not be replicated as there was no existing community onsite to provide the initial contacts for forming relationships with community elders.

What made this project unique and daunting is that the Guild's Lake Courts community had been demolished fifty years before the collection of oral histories began. From 1942 to 1946, the property was associated with the evolution of Portland from a city with a very small, semi-dispersed African American population into one with an isolated and highly segregated population. The city experienced a population explosion as workers migrated to lucrative wartime workforce opportunities, and increased its African American population nearly a factor of ten.

The goal of the preservationist, when working to achieve landmark status for a development, is to defend the significance of the site based on one or more arguments for significance. Significance is defined by the property's importance to history, architecture, archeology, engineering, or culture of a community, and ranked according to its relevance to the state or the nation.² In this effort to answer the question of architectural significance, chapter four focuses on the distinctive physical characteristics of the design and construction. Typically this would be done as a combination of site visits and archival research. The visits to the property would be used to collect as-built documentation and to determine the extent of the historic integrity of the site. In this case, historic photographs, architectural blueprints, and site maps were used to provide invaluable documentary evidence since the site itself had little to offer the research effort.

Historic photographs came from three sources: 1) archives and libraries, 2) scrapbooks and albums of former residents, and 3) private ephemera collectors. Archival collections were notable for their images of structures; these often were shot

by Leonard Delano, who was contracted by HAP to document its activities at Guild's Lake Courts, and are dominated by images from the first year of construction. The Oregon Historical Society has negatives for many images taken by Les Orderman that were printed in *The Oregon Journal*. A private collection and archive owned by Tom Robinson has the negatives from taken by deLay in the 1940s for *The Oregonian*, which includes images that did not make the paper. The images of professional photographers were also included in scrapbooks of former residents who had purchased professional class and school production pictures and images of the area taken by Huge Ackroyd. The children of Guild's Lake Courts had also, in many cases, saved their childhood albums, which contained many candid images, some of which provided additional details about the built environment in addition to the candid expression of daily life not captured by the lens for hire.

Historical research, oral histories, and a physical inspection of the site focused on historic functions, activities, and the role of Guild's Lake Courts in the history of the community. Community was defined geographically as the Slabtown neighborhood, culturally as linked to the history of African Americans in Portland, Oregon, and nationally as linked to migration of families and individuals to the West Coast and its defense industries.

The site has little potential to yield important information. Since all structures associated with the Defense-era housing program on the site were demolished in sections from 1946 to 1951, and because these units lacked basements, there is not even an archeological record to examine. The only site visits were conducted with the

assistance of former residents as guides to develop a walking tour of the site and to verify the loss of the onsite historic record. These multiple visits in the field with former residents found that only one sidewalk remained and all the trees were planted after the 1940s.

Nearly all of all buildings and sites placed on the National Register of Historic Places, since the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, represent the history of elite white males. The first landmarking of public housing developments focused on the efforts of the federal and local housing programs during the Great Depression, Techwood Homes in Atlanta and First Houses in New York City. While in recent years some PWA developments have been landmarked and many landmarked public housing units have been demolished, little work has been done to preserve Defense-era structures, which has left a gap of knowledge in the historic record and urban landscape. Guild's Lake Courts is one of the largest public housing developments ever built in the United States. As a substantial large-scale development, the planned residential community offers insights into race relations of the era.

Developing the Research Question

According to the unpublished bulletin on ascertaining the eligibility (integrity/historic worth) of public housing developments in the United States,³ there are six key questions to address in regards to evaluation of a public housing project built before 1950:

Table: Six Key Questions for Researchers of Public Housing Built before 1950

Question	Answer for Guild's Lake Courts
What aspects of the historic context does the property represent?	Design evolution as a prototype for site designs of the suburbs, residential segregation practices, integration of public schools and community centers, worker housing in World War II, technological innovations in housing production
Is it associated with the PWA program, the USHA, or defense construction?	Lanham Act defense housing program
Was it associated with slum clearance?	No
Was there an important racial component to its development?	Yes
Was the architecture noted as an example of modern design?	Yes. Innovative site plan, no to "modern" styling on the exterior, spartan functional interiors with prominent community centers, and substantial open spaces
Was there an important local component to public housing activity and housing reform?	No agenda by housing reformers or HAP ever to save. The local component is basically that the Housing Authority had no interest in providing public housing beyond the war years. No impending or recent demolition activities looming over interviewees. Designed as temporary housing.

Historic Context and Significance

Part One: Criterion A

Classification under Criterion A, association with a significant event, would be limited to 1948 when the site became evacuee housing. The trailers brought in to house Vanport Flood evacuees and the cement pads poured on site to accommodate

these flimsy structures were the key structural element to preserve under this criterion. In truth, these structures remained onsite for the least amount of time of any of the housing supplied as part of the Guild's Lake Courts community.

Part Two: Criterion B

Classification under Criterion B, ethnic heritage and community development, reflects the first attempt within the city of Portland to provide housing for African Americans. Segregated housing is not an end to itself, but in this case, it was a step forward, when the federal government provided equal services and enabled blacks to move into an unwelcoming city for job opportunities. This is part of a social history of government intervention into an unjust housing market with an extremely low vacancy rate.

Part Three: Criterion C

Classification under Criterion C, design and construction, has a strong justification because two divisions, including the electric-unit section, are the major work of a master architect. This requires a property-type analysis; the project no longer stands out as a distinctive architectural style but it would have stood out in 1942. Morris Whitehouse has been recognized for his talents as one of Oregon's greatest architects. It was the final phase and last major project of his career. The project can be linked to efforts by Pietro Belluschi in Vancouver, Washington, as noted in Morris's blueprints. There are efforts to access additional architectural

records now that designers' names have been uncovered, which would explore the eligibility of other divisions of Guild's Lakes Courts to be works of a master architect or team of master architects. The property design reflects historic function and technologies. Spatial relationships are key.

The local level of significance offers a weak case and one that fails because the hypothetical effort to explore level of significance as if the structure existed assumes that it does exist and would not have been so easily forgotten. This project did not demonstrate a decisive or pivotal role in the development of later federal housing programs; in fact, the project has been forgotten even locally. The mechanism of the institutional memory loss merits further exploration.

Implementation

The first primary sources evaluated were maps, in order to ascertain the exact location of the wartime community. The research then branched out in two directions: 1) the quest for articles published in Portland's newspapers and 2) archival records of various institutions: the local Housing Authority; the Archives of the City of Portland; the United States Housing Authority at the F. D. Roosevelt Presidential Library collection in Hyde Park, New York; Fruit and Flower Daycare at its Northwest Portland center; Vanport College at Portland State University; Portland Public Schools on its website; and the records of the architectural firm of Morris Whitehouse at Oregon Historical Society. These sources contained minutes and notes from meetings, photographs, scrapbooks, blueprints, letters, journals, transcripts of radio speeches,

maps, memos, account statements, and litigation records. Working with former residents and employees illuminated the social history of Guild's Lake Courts, and made possible a greater understanding of the daily life at Guild's Lake Courts.

The shared recollections were enhanced by archival images I brought to each interview and reunion, and in some cases personal paper ephemera brought to the interviews by the interviewee led to new questions. In the case particularly of Vanport survivors, the access to historic images of a point early in their life lead to multiple requests for duplicates of images brought to interviews and motivated them to attend reunions to recapture a lost piece of their lives. I asked that interviewees to bring photographs in the pre-interview; in some cases they also brought along journals, community publications, scrapbooks, report cards, baseball statistics, and a sign.

The architectural portion of the historical record was limited to a few blueprints and a partial site plan. This study's oral histories expanded the pre-existing recorded collection on Guild's Lake Courts, deposited at Oregon Historical Society, which hitherto focused only on Vanport Flood victims who were relocated to Guild's Lake Courts in temporary trailers. Three formal, publicized public gatherings of Guild's Lake Courts residents included additional voices in the narrative. These events were videotaped and in some cases the transcript of this video file was the only access I had to a person's story. Other individuals, both attendees and non-attendees who became aware of the project because of the reunion, volunteered to be interviewed, and requests for the unedited DVD of the event accompanied requests for images.

Typical geographical sources for the built environment, such as Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, do not exist for this wartime period. A neighborhood-level cartographic record was not produced because of the demands for national security in the 1940s. Sanborn Maps from the 1950s have been examined to understand some of the surviving built features of the neighborhood that predated the construction of wartime housing. It is evident that a fire station from the 1940s, built to protect Guild's Lake Courts or perhaps the oil tank farm, still exists as a structure on the south side of St. Helen's Road.

At the City of Portland Archives, maps of the entire development (see Appendix E) were obtained, and were brought to each face-to-face interview to help the narrators locate their former residence(s). This was less successful than one might have hoped (see Table 5-1). Even with the aid of the maps, which indicate street address and type of residential structure (detached, duplex, four-plex, six-plex), most interviewees were unable to recall the precise location of their former home. Maps and aerial photographs were used as a tool to examine 1) the site design and 2) the chronology of land development patterns. They proved to be a less useful tool for the study of disposition patterns and ownership patterns, however. The creation of a GIS display to recreate ownership patterns was hampered by the intricate nature of land ownership transactions of the leased parcels of land throughout the 1940s. Housing Authority minutes from the period replaced maps as a tool for addressing the question: "Was the federal development merely serendipitous, or did the process of developing and preparing the site for the defense housing projects act as a springboard for their

planned industrial expansion?” The need to produce a GIS display by race became moot once it was determined that, for the first two residential development periods, the African American population was segregated into one of the sites, referred to as the “Negro Section,” surrounding the Gona Street Community Center.

Housing Authority minutes and newspaper articles indicate that the Guild’s Lake Courts defense housing had a population of roughly 10,000 individuals in 1943. All the residents interviewed in 2006 were whites, and were born in Oregon, Washington, Iowa, Missouri, or Nebraska. During the wartime boom, there were approximately 2,000 African Americans at Guild’s Lake Courts, and the Guild’s Lake Courts reunions created a previously untapped opportunity to connect with a few members of this community who still live in Portland. Census data from 1950 list 2,000 African American residents within the census tracts that include, but are not limited to, the Guild’s Lake public housing. Throughout the era, the Kaiser Corporation kept records of state of origin of the blacks residing at Vanport. The top five states experiencing outward migration were Texas, Arkansas, Oklahoma, Missouri, and Louisiana.⁴

The historic record refers to defense housing at Guild’s Lake Courts by many terms, including “Kaiservilles,” “public housing,” “victory housing,” “crackerbox homes,” “federal defense housing,” “the swamp,” “wartime housing,” “demountable housing,” “temporary housing,” “trailer housing,” and “military barracks.” In addition to records on defense housing, I also searched archives for records, photographs, and articles pertaining to local businesses, religious institutions, schools, and local

geography such as but not limited to the movie theaters, restaurants, the Portland Ice Arena (1914–1963), the Montgomery Ward department store, the Vaughn Street Baseball Park, St. Patrick’s Catholic Church, the Forestry Building, Guild’s Lake, and McBee’s Food Store. Defense industry contractors, daycare operators, and District 1 of the Portland Public Schools system were also explored via periodical searches of the 1940s local press, and, in the case of the Fruit and Flower Daycare Center, I examined the nonprofit’s archives, which included minutes covering the operations of the childcare centers.

Each interview was recorded on audiotape on a very simple machine using non-metallic tape. After contact had been established, a pre-interview questionnaire, a cover letter, and two types of consent forms were sent to each individual, along with a stamped return envelope (See Appendix XX.) The project was publicized in various classified ads in Oregon papers, primarily *The Oregonian*. “The text of the advertisement in Section 26: Personal Messages was: ‘**GUILD’S LAKE COURT** student seeking to interview former residents of Guild’s Lake Courts for class project,” with a phone number included.” If the person contacted via the classified ad was forthcoming with other potential interviewees, snowball interviews were conducted. In some cases the researcher suspects that elderly parents and siblings were consulted by the interviewee to fill out details of the pre-questionnaire, but that these individuals were unwilling or too ill to participate in an extensive interview themselves.

Adaptations of Methodology that Occurred during Data Collection

The effort to locate former residents of Guild's Lake was greatly enhanced by two historians working on the Slabtown Community Festival. I became acquainted with historians Mike Ryerson, the owner and editor of the *NW Neighbor*, the neighborhood newspaper from 1975 to 1986 and currently a reporter for *The Northwest Examiner*, and Tim Hills, historian for McMenamin's⁵, when these men led a walking tour of NW 23rd Avenue. We met biweekly during the summer of 2007 to share images of Slabtown.

McMenamin's public relations staff released a separate press release regarding the Guild's Lake Courts reunion, which drew attention from a number of papers, including *The Northwest Examiner* (a monthly neighborhood paper), *The Portland Tribune* (a weekly free paper), and *The Observer* (a local weekly paper committed to cultural diversity). *The Northwest Examiner* ran my story about Guild's Lake Courts, along with five images and a request for additional contacts and images. The article in *The Observer* followed the press release text, and had one supporting image. The article in *The Portland Tribune* ran on the cover of the *Out and About* section, but only one day before the event. Three individuals arrived too late for the reunion, but were connected with the project via a graphic display of the development that was with other components of the Slabtown history exhibit.

Over time, the emphasis on certain life experiences and photographic props available during the face-to-face interviews shifted. I attribute this to the additional and often more animated images brought to successive interviews. Since my aim with

the images was to stimulate memories, I narrowed in on images and experiences I was learning about at the site itself and less on neighborhood anchors like the Forestry Center. I valued the new images and started filtering out less pertinent aerial images from the group brought to the interviews as my collection of historic images expanded. A static collection of images would have been more systematic, but I sacrificed this controlled model in an effort to enrich the stories. Since each transcript was returned to interviewees for edits and review, I tried to create a positive, non-invasive, unaffecting working relationship of trust with each interviewee.

Guild's Lake was one of the largest housing projects ever built in the United States, and may be the counterpoint to the Vanport story, but its memory has also been overshadowed by its contemporary housing project. There is no legend or false identity, either to defend or refute, in this void in the narrative of 1940s Portland. As more and more Defense-era oral histories are gathered nationally, they are increasingly relevant to mediation efforts under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act.

¹ "National Register of Historic Places" *National Park Service*, <http://www.nps.gov/nr/publications/bulletins.htm> (accessed April 5, 2008).

² Patrick W. Andus, and Rebecca H. Shrimp. "How to Apply the Nation Register Criteria for Evaluation" *National Register Bulletin #15*, revised 2002, 16A p. 3, National Park Service, Washington D.C..

³ Paul Lusignan, Judith Robinson, Laura Bobeczko, and Jeffery Shrimpton. *Public Housing: A Historic Context, 1933–1949*, vol. 2. (Unpublished HUD, NPS, NRHP, 2000), 12.

⁴ E. Kimbark MacColl, *The Growth of a City: Power Politics in Portland, Oregon, 1915–1950* (Portland, OR: Georgian Press, 1979), 582.

⁵ McMenamain's is a brewery company that owns a chain of restaurants and hotels in the Pacific Northwest. A number of their operations are in historic structures adapted for new uses and they have a team of historians and consultants working to promote the individuality of each historic property in their portfolio/empire/kingdom (rented and owned).

APPENDIX B:

RESIDENTIAL DATE: Interviewees and Reunion Attendees

First Name	Last Name (maiden)	Lived at Guild's Lake Courts	Reunions	Face to Face
Willa May	Baker (Williams)	1948-1951	2007	no
Fred	Batchelor		2009	no
Janice	Bell (Loe)	1945	2007, 2008	yes
Bob	Braaten		2007	no
Beverly	Braaten (Meskel)	1942-X	2008, 2009	no
Emanuel	Breckel	1946	n/a	yes
Edith	Bunch (Peterson)	1945-1947	2007	yes
Raymond	Burell		2007	no
Dale	Butler	1943-46(47-49)	none	yes
Gloria	Cash (Campbell)	1946-1950	all	no
Charles	Charnquist	1943-1949	2008, 2009	no
Cheryl	Corum	War Housing	none	yes
Daniel	Corum	War Housing	none	yes
James	Crolly		2007	no
Shirly	Cuff (Horsley)	1943-1951	2008	no
Maria	Dunlop (Raz)	employee	2007	yes
Howard	Easton	Kellog Park	none	yes
Laura Mea	Elligsen (Coffman)	1942-1946	2007	no
Alice	Gardner (Hagen)		2009	no
Pattie	Griffith (Mosley)	1944-1949	2008	no
B.J.	Hale (Warrick)	1943-1945	2008	no
JoAnn	Haynor (Stearns)		2009x	no
Carolyn	Henderson (Brecken)		2009x	no
Robert	Hilger	1943-1946	2007, 2008	yes
William	Hillgaertner	1945-X	none	yes
Darlene	Hurd		none	yes
Rose	Jenkins		n/a	no
Kelly	Judy	1946-1949	2009	no
Joe	Kordic	neighbor	all	yes
James	Larson	1942-1949	2008, 2009	no
Don	Launger	1943-1946	none	yes
Arnold	Leppert	1943-1948	all	yes
Luther	Lockett	1945-1950	2008	no
Marjorie	Nordling (Leppert)	1943-1948	2007	no
Ronald	Pedersen	(1943- 1945)	none	yes
Vincent	Richard	neighbor	2007, 2008	yes
Eldon	Rose	1942-1951	2009	no
Marvine	Rose	1942-1951	2009	no
Dorothy	Shull (Jensen)	1944-1948	2007, 2008	yes
Audrey	Sims (Daniels)	1944-1948	2007	no
Mayetta	Smith (McCoy)	1949-1950	2009	no
James	Springer		2007	no
John	Sweeney	1946-1950	2007, 2008	yes
Lorenzo	Thorton		2007	no
Linda	Walton (Daniels)	1944-1950	2007, 2008	yes

APPENDIX C:

TWO TIMELINES

Timeline Federal and Housing Authority of Portland Policy

1917 U.S. Housing Corporation and Emergency Fleet Established

Federal Housing Program WWI

1933 National Recovery Act

The Public Works Authority housing division is established. Public Works Administration (PWA) completes 52 developments in four years. A third of the developments are built for Blacks.

1935 U.S. v. Certain Land in the City of Louisville

Jefferson County, KT, 297, U.S. 726. The Federal government's use of eminent domain to create housing is challenged. Slum clearance activity is shifted to local housing authorities.

1936 George Healy Act

Congress sets income ceiling for public housing residents.

1937 Wagner Public Housing Act

Federal government caps individual unit cost at \$5,000. Increasingly links Public Housing to slum clearance filtering worries. Establishes United States Housing Authority (USHA). Stringent construction and maintenance cost guidelines. The program builds 100,000 units in 3 years. The majority of the units are in cities impacted by war industry migration. 65,000 units are transferred to the Defense Housing Program.

1940 Lenham Act

\$150 million for housing Defense Phase. (\$3,116,000 spent in Oregon as of 1-28-45 to support schools, recreation, VD hospitals, and childcare.)

1941 Community Facilities Act of June 1941 authorizes Lenham Act funding for construction and operation of nurseries, community centers and public school.

1941 President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's Executive Order 8802

forbade discrimination in wartime defense industries and created the Fair Employment Practice Committee (FEPC) to investigate charges of racial discrimination

Feb 1942 War Phase

1943 Lenham Act Amended

Maritime Commission no longer discourages mothers with children under age 14 from working and Lenham Act nurseries start excepting two year olds

December 20, 1946

Chairman Moores resigns from the Housing Authority of Portland (had appointment four years, chairman 15 months), pleads for Vanport to become industrial. The private housing market boom is forcing him to resign. Tooze temporarily takes over chairman job.

1946

Lenham Act funding for operation of nurseries, community centers and public school ends.

January 14, 1947

Dahlke made chairman of HAP

September, 1947

No more Federal aid to public schools within Defense Housing sites.

1945-1955 Disposition Phase**April 10, 1946**

Letter to HAP from FPHA that projects were assigned temporary instead of permanent classification "because of the opposition in Portland to an extensive post-war low-rent housing program, and because of the improper location for permanent housing of many of the sites...dwellings comply with FPHA minimum standards for permanent housing". Recommends move to rural areas and make minimal improvements. (E. Stanton Foster)

1946

Policy to remove woman from HAP employment.

1949 National Housing Act

(Urban Renewal)

1948 End of Restrictive Covenants

(Grandfathering to 1950)

May, 1948 Vanport Flood**1954 Urban Renewal Act**

Timeline Guild's Lake District and Guild's Lake Courts

1840s

First Anglo settlement in Guild's Lake District by Peter and Elizabeth Guild; 1847 claim includes 598 acres mostly wetlands. Homestead used to raise cattle, renting to dairy farms.

1850s

The era of disputes over land ownership

1867

Swan Island bar is dredged

1873

First rail lines cross through Guild's Lake District (

1880s

Forty to fifty Chinese workers live in the Guild's Lake District. They operated truck gardens and farms. Guild's Lake was a crescent shaped 250-acre riparian marsh adjacent to the Willamette River containing Kittredge and Doana Lakes (fed by water from Balch Creek)

1905

Lewis and Clark Centennial Exposition opens. A reconfigured Guild's Lake is a significant natural feature of John Olmstead's landscape design.

1915

part of near Linnton Guild's Lake District annexed by city of Portland

1921

Montgomery Wards Building completed

1905-1925

Landfill of Guild's Lake marshlands starts off as a private venture taken over when about 20% complete by the WPA.

1929

Guild's Lake landfill completed

February 1942

Construction of Guild's Lake Courts will evolve into a development of 2,606 units, eight separate "projects", 166 acres leased, 72 acres purchased, five community buildings, five childcare centers.

November 1942

Guild's Lake Courts first units open for occupancy. 82% of units designed by Whitehouse and Church ready for occupancy. The 358 units are filled by 1,074 people.

December 1943

Guild's Lake Courts near completion of the final 2,606 units, 2,590 completed, 2,518 occupied the population in the units is 13,643.

December 1944

Guild's Lake Courts 2,540 occupied, waitlist 247, population 9,144. The units in division 39095 have been dismantled.

January 1945

Pedestrian overpass built over Kittredge Ave. for \$54,659.

July 1945

Intentional fire at city dump, NW 25th Place, upsets Guild's Lake Courts residents.

October 1945

28 acres of Guild's Lake District sold to Standard Oil to build Asphalt Plant. 2,800 residents reported in the "area" (*Journal* 10-30-45). Another 15-acre site bound by NW Nicolai, 25th Ave, 25th Place was the incinerator property (*Oregonian* 11-1-45). 8.5 acres near intersection of N. Yeon Ave and Saint Helens Road sold to Mt. Hood Soap Co. (11-1-1945 clipping). Tax Lots 19 and 20 Pacific Chain (182 dwellings, Sep 1945 HAP min., 12 acres image May, 1946). Northwest Front, 27 acres Central Communities Co.

March 27, 1946

Meeting at Mayor's office. Anxiety over transfer of land to industrial use. Companies represented: Union Pacific RR, Inland Motor Freight, Pacific Highway Transport, Inc., Pacific Chain and Mfg. Co., Standard Oil. Law Firm: Hampson, Koerner, Young & Swett.

1947

Montgomery Ward site to impact 236 units [Also: Van Waters and Rodgers, Willard Storage Battery, Crown-Zellerbach Corp. (NW 21st, 22nd Quimby and Raleigh, 16 families).] HAP minutes: 2 acres, Arrow Transportation, NW 35th, 14.5 acres, 55 structures, 236 units owned by Union Pacific RR sold to "Eastern Concern" requested deprogramming. Guild's Lake school, 5.5 acres on St. Helens Road, disposed of in Oct, post legal land battle. Riley wants to make it a police school. (Built in 1943.)

252 units moved to U of O and Oregon State.

July 25, 1947

Guild's Lake Tenants League meet with Mayor. Issue: use regarding Gona Street Community Building, Urban League present, talk regarding No. 4623 NW 44 Ct. "in colored district", units overall 95% occupied.

January 7, 1949

Journal : two sites at Guild's Lake still in use as trailers (housing flood victims).

May, 1949

1,667 units remain at Guild's Lake, 1,583 occupied.

August 6, 1949

Units put up for sale: NW 28th Pl., NW 27th Pl., NW Wake.

August 11, 1949

3500 NW 35th Ave, 392 trailers used by flood victims put up for sale.

November 1, 1949

SP&S asked HAP to remove housing on its property, five acres.

April 21, 1949

Journal: Hazeltin and Co. pressing for destruction of 16 units.

May 1949

20 trailers with Vanport Refugees still in use

January 1950

Injunction against Dolan Building Material Company from removing housing units, because an intact unit had been noticed at SW Barbur and Hamilton. It is not legal to move units intact on city streets.

October 1950

The last of Guild's Lake Housing on industrial land vacated. HAP relocates 931 families between May 1950 and Oct 31, 1950 (*Oregonian*, 10-9-50, scrapbook). 358 demountable units will remain in use on federally owned lands

December 1, 1950

339 occupied units at Guild's Lake.

1952

HAP purchases 16 acres of Guild's Lake Courts land.

1953

HAP sells a permanent Guild's Lake structure for \$1,000.

1964

Forestry Building burns down

2001

Guild's Lake Industrial Sanctuary

APPENDIX D

NATIONAL REGISTER LISTINGS IN OREGON FOR ARCHITECTS ASSOCIATED WITH GUILD'S LAKE COURTS

Adapted from lecture "The Legacy of Morris White House" April 4, 2009 by Natalie Perrin

Architect or Firm	County	Historic Name	Address
Lazarus, Whitehouse, & Foulhoux	Multnomah	Wickersham Apartments	410 NW 18th Ave.
Morris H. Whitehouse & Associates	Clackamas	Clark, Elizabeth, House	812 John Adams St.
Whitehouse & Foulhoux	Jackson	Fiero, Conro, House	4615 Hamrick Rd.
Whitehouse & Foulhoux	Multnomah	Corbett, Elliott R., House	1600 S.W. Greenwood Rd.
Whitehouse & Foulhoux	Multnomah	Corbett, H. L. and Gretchen Hoyt, House	01405 SW. Corbett Hill Cir.
Whitehouse & Foulhoux	Multnomah	Seven Hundred Five Davis Street Apartments	2141 NW Davis St.
Whitehouse & Foulhoux	Multnomah	University Club	1225 SW 6th Ave
Whitehouse & Foulhoux	Multnomah	Mann, Anna Lewis, Old People's Home	1021 NE. 33rd Ave.
Whitehouse and Church	Deschutes	Deschutes County Library	507 NW. Wall St.
Whitehouse, Morris H.	Multnomah	Balfour--Gutherie Building	733 SW Oak St.
Whitehouse, Morris H.	Multnomah	Lewthwaite, Alexander and Cornelia, House	1715 SE Montgomery Dr.
Whitehouse, Morris	Multnomah	U.S. Courthouse	620 SW Main St.
Whitehouse, Morris H.	Multnomah	Temple Beth Israel	1931 NW Flanders St.
Whitehouse, Morris Homans	Hood River	Columbia Gorge Hotel	W of Hood River at 9000 Westcliffe Dr.
Whitehouse, Morris Homans	Marion	Chemeketa Lodge No. 1 Odd Fellows Buildings	185--195 High St. NE
Herman Brookman	Multnomah	Temple Beth Israel	1931 NW Flanders St.
Herman Brookman	Multnomah	Country Estate of M. Lloyd Frank/Lewis and Clark Campus	Fir Acres
Sutton, Whitney, Aandahl & Fritsch	Multnomah	Fruit and Flower Day Nursery	SW 12th & Market

APPENDIX E:

GUILD'S LAKE COURTS MAPS Courtesy City of Portland Archives

Index Map:

**INDEX MAP
OF
PORTLAND
OREGON
AND
ENVIRONS**

INDEX

PROJECT NAME	PROJECT NUMBER	FAMILY DWELL. UNITS	DORM. UNITS
COLUMBIA VILLA	OREG. 2-1	400	
DEKUM COURT	" 35021	85	
ST. JOHN'S WOODS	" 35024	968	
PARKSIDE HOMES	" 35025	260	
HUDSON STREET HOMES	" 35027	118	
FIR COURT	" 35028	72	
GARTRELL PROJECT	" 35029 *	725	
UNIVERSITY HOMES	" 35051	2005	
VANPORT CITY	" 35053	9942	
FAIRVIEW HOMES	" 35092	264	
SLAVIN COURTS	" 35123	75	
FULTON HOMES	" 35124	324	
BELLAIRA COURT	" 35201		110
POWERS DORMITORY	" 35202 **		498
FESSENDEN HOMES	" 35279	152	
EAST VANPORT	" 35282	484	
GUILD'S LAKE COURTS			
	OREG. 35288		
	DIVISION 35026	358	
	" 35059	360	
	" 35091	718	
	" 35095	114	
	" 35096	90	
	" 35097	130	
	" 35098	476	
	" 35099	360	
TOTALS		18480	608

PLANS OF THE GARTRELL PROJECT ARE NOT INCLUDED IN THE SET BUT ARE INDEXED IN SUBJECT SET ON FILE IN THE CENTRAL OFFICE, 404 ALDERWAY BUILDING, PORTLAND, OREG. THE SET ON FILE CONSISTS OF 11 SHEETS AND COVERS THE 80 ACRES INVOLVED IN THE PROJECT.
** THIS PROJECT INVOLVES THE CONVERSION OF THE POWERS WAREHOUSE TO DORMITORIES. NO PLANS HAVE BEEN PREPARED. PLANS ARE ON FILE IN THE CENTRAL OFFICE.

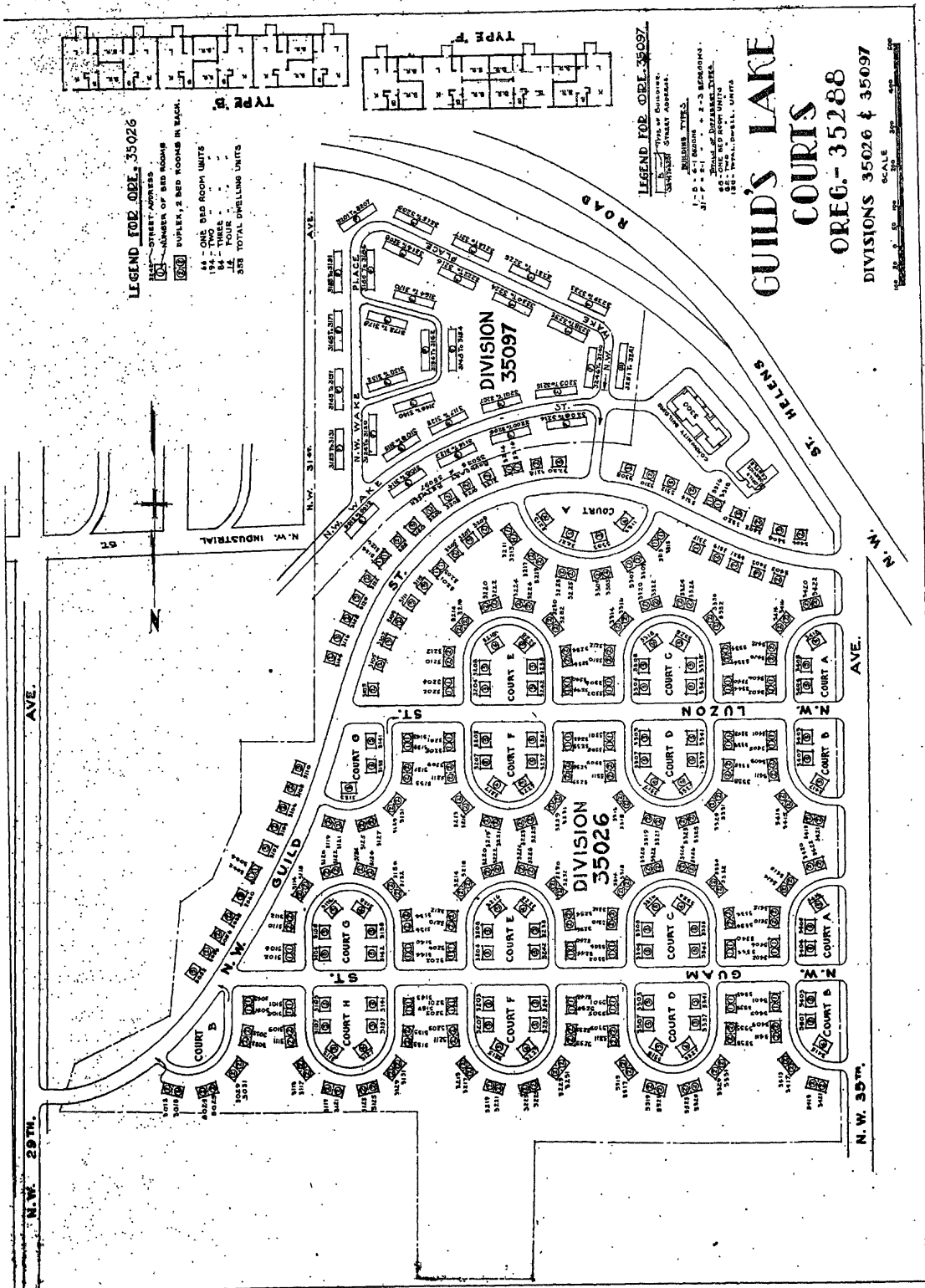
NATIONAL HOUSING AGENCY
JOHN B. BLANDFORD JR., ADMINISTRATOR
FEDERAL PUBLIC HOUSING AUTHORITY
HERBERT EMMERICH, COMMISSIONER

WAR HOUSING PROJECTS

HOUSING AUTHORITY OF PORTLAND
404 ALDERWAY BUILDING
PORTLAND, OREGON

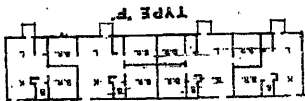
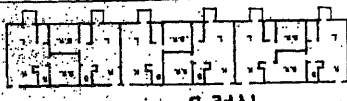
INDEX MAP

Division	Known As	Architect(s)	Units
35026	Electric Units	Morris H. Whitehouse	358 map p. 430
35059		Herzog & Tucker	360 map p. 436
35091	African American	Harrett & Logan and Earl Cash	718 map p. 433
35095	Infill	Richard Sundeleaf and Herman Brookman	114 map p. 435
35096		Sutton Whitney & Aandahl	90 map p. 434
35097		Morris H. Whitehouse	130 map p. 430
35098		Jones & Marsh Road & Schneider	476 map p. 431
35099		John K. Dukehart	360 map p. 432



LEGEND FOR OBE. 35026

- 1. STREET ADDRESS
- 2. NUMBER OF BED ROOMS IN EACH
- 3. DUPLEX, 2 BED ROOMS
- 4. ONE BED ROOM UNIT
- 5. TWO BED ROOM UNIT
- 6. FOUR BED ROOM UNIT
- 7. TOTAL DWELLING UNITS



LEGEND FOR OBE. 35097

- 1. TYPE OF BUILDING
- 2. STREET ADDRESS
- 3. NUMBER OF BED ROOMS
- 4. 1 - 2 BED ROOMS
- 5. 2 - 3 BED ROOMS
- 6. TOTAL DWELLING UNITS
- 7. TOTAL DWELLING UNITS

GUILD'S LAKE COURTS
OREG. - 35288
DIVISIONS 35026 & 35097

SCALE 1" = 50'

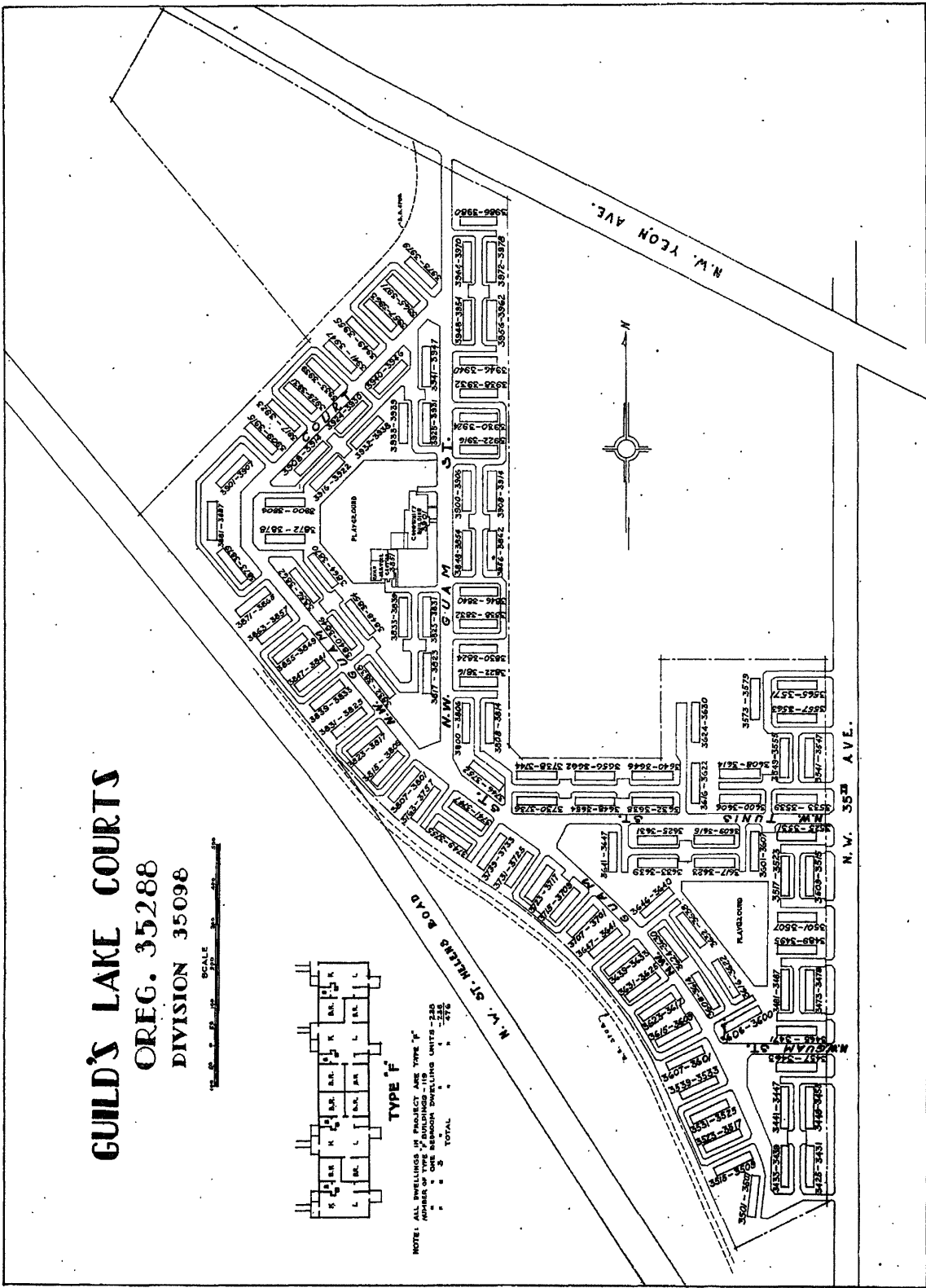
GUILD'S LAKE COURTS

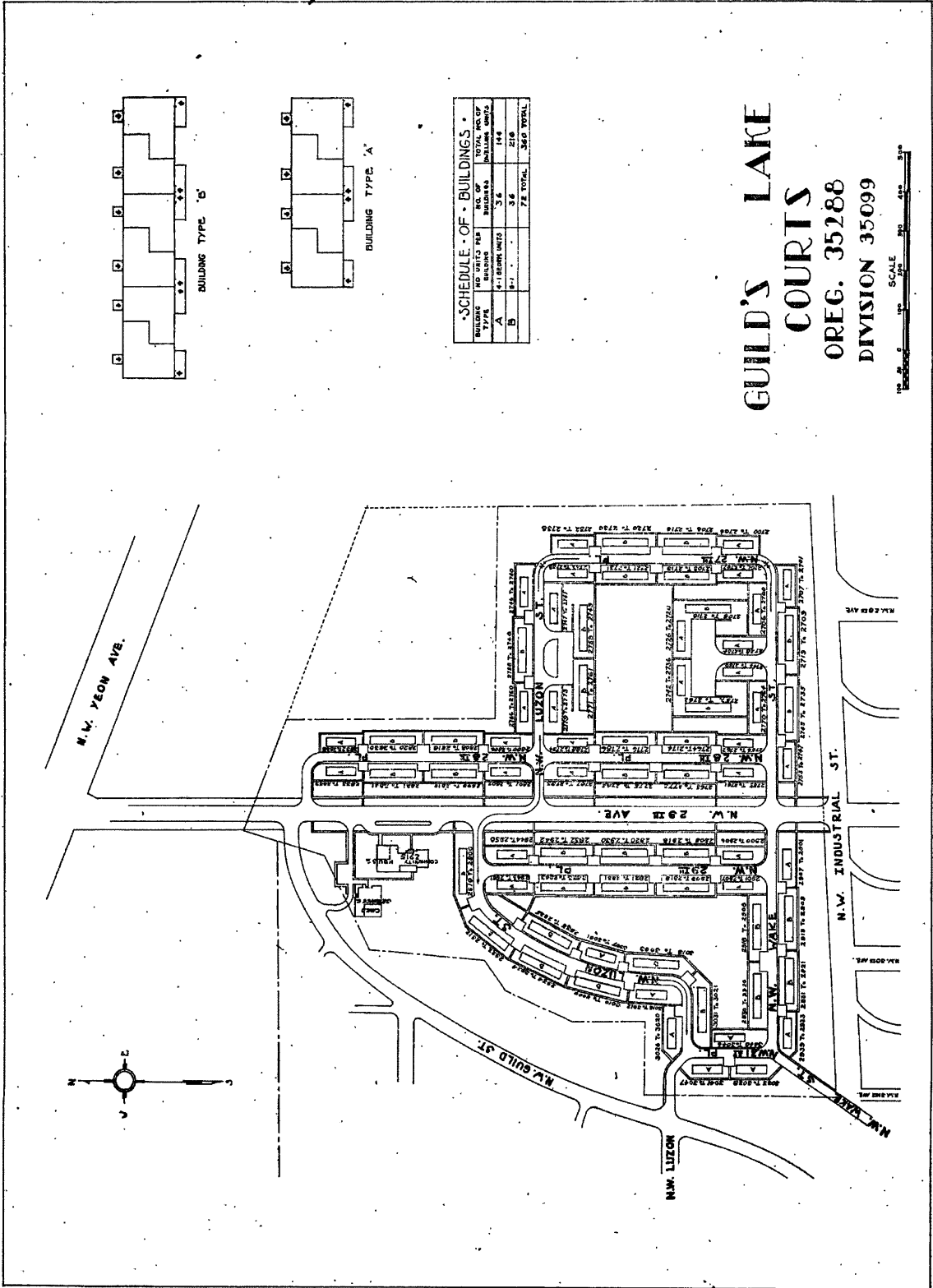
OREG. 35288
DIVISION 35098



TYPE "F"

NOTE: ALL DWELLINGS IN PROJECT ARE TYPE "F"
NUMBER OF TYPE "F" DWELLINGS - 118
NUMBER OF ONE BEDROOM DWELLING UNITS - 236
TOTAL - 236





SCHEDULE OF BUILDINGS

BUILDING TYPE	NO. OF UNITS PER BUILDING	NO. OF BUILDINGS	TOTAL NO. OF UNITS
A	2	32	64
B	3	2	6
TOTAL		78	70

**GUILD'S LAKE
COURTS**
 OREG. 35288
 DIVISION 35099



GUILD'S LAKE COURTS

OREG. 35288

DIVISION 35059



TYPE 'D'



1st FLOOR



2nd FLOOR

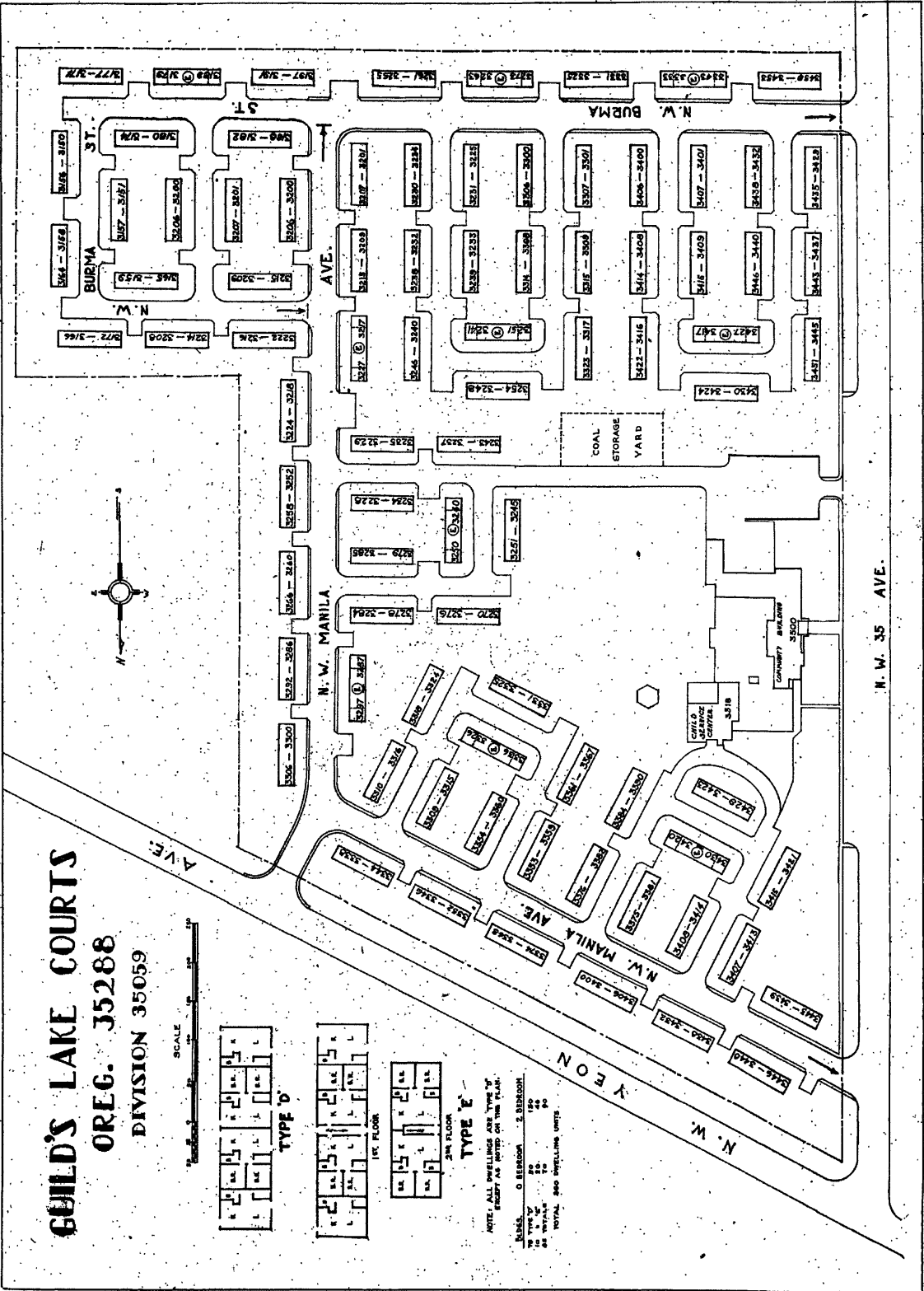
TYPE 'E'

NOTE: ALL DWELLINGS ARE TYPE 'D' EXCEPT AS NOTED ON THIS PLAN.

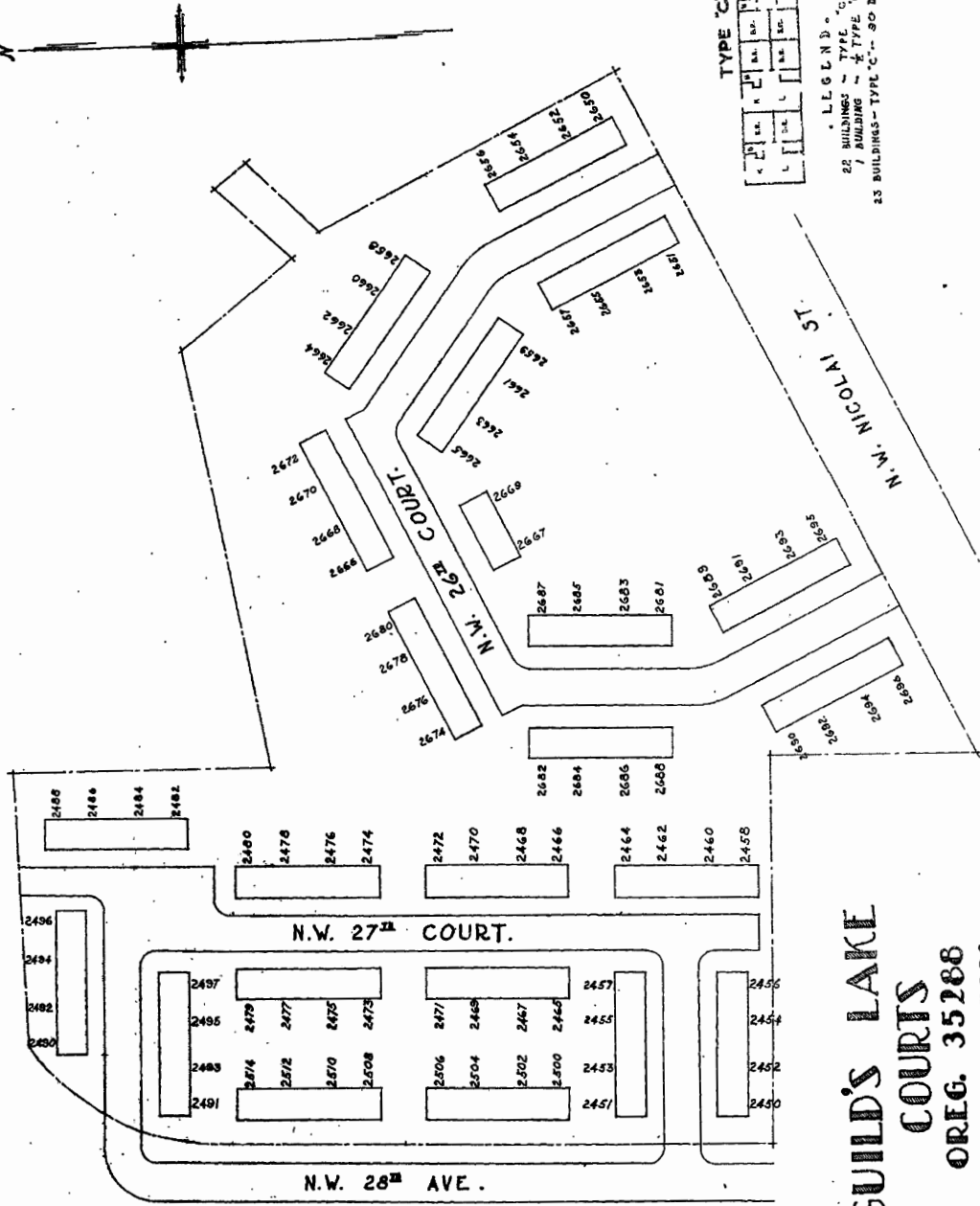
Legend:

- BATHROOM
- KITCHEN
- LIVING
- BED ROOM
- HALL
- BATH

TYPE 'D'	10
TYPE 'E'	10
TOTAL	200 DWELLING UNITS



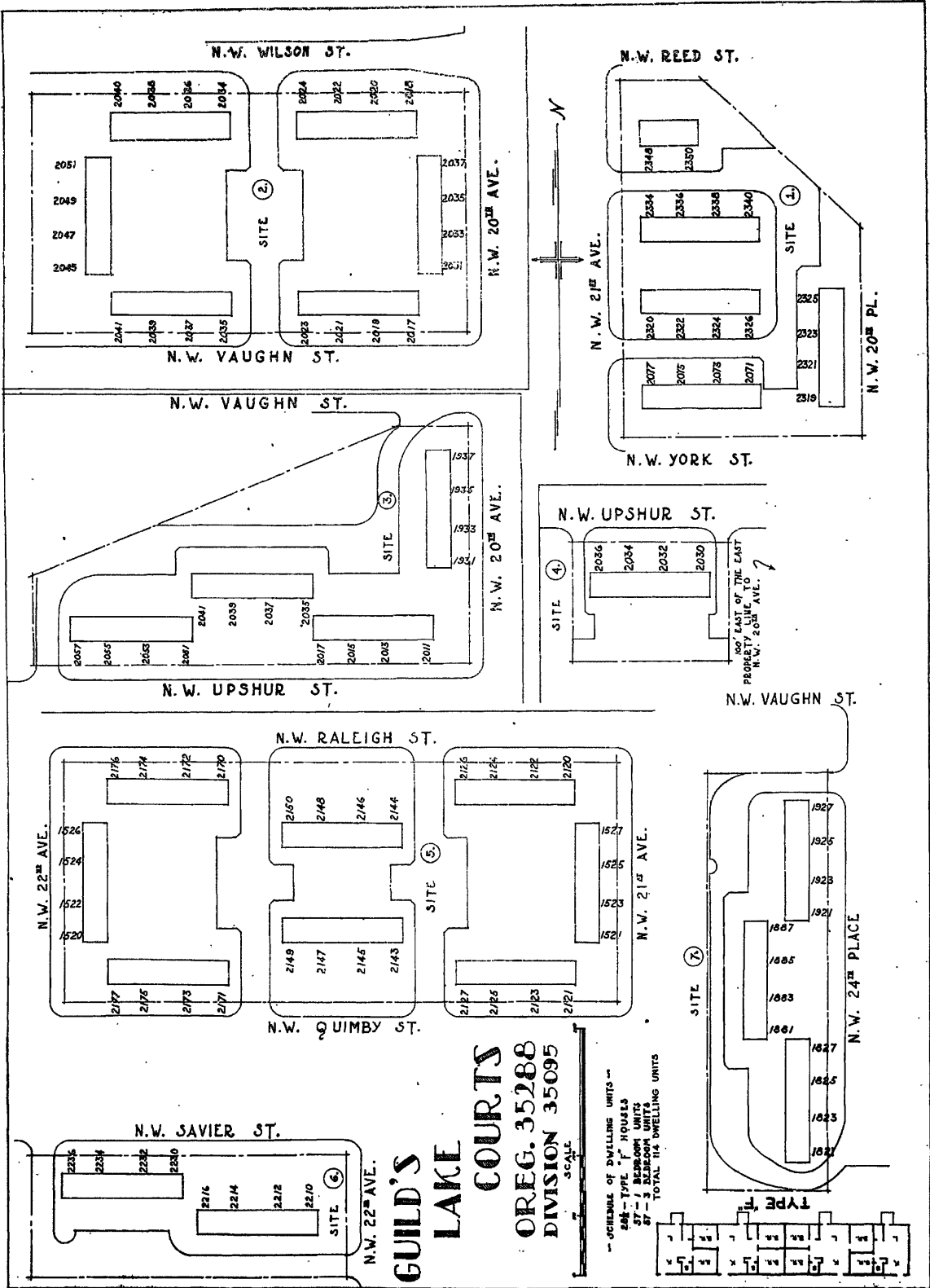
N.W. INDUSTRIAL ST.



LEGEND:
 22 BUILDINGS - TYPE "C"
 7 BUILDING - TYPE "C-1"
 23 BUILDINGS - TYPE "C-1" - 30 DWELLING UNITS

**GUILD'S LAKE
 COURTS**
 OREG. 35286
 DIVISION 35096

SCALE
 1" = 50'



APPENDIX F:

PRE-INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear _____,

Thanks for offering to help me learn more about Guild's Lake Courts and Portland, Oregon in the 1940s, by sharing your experiences. These pre-interview questions are just designed to help me prepare for our pending face-to-face interview. If you have difficulty reading this form or filling out this form, we can simply go over these questions on the phone or in person. If you have any photos or scrapbooks of your life in Guild's Lake, I would love to see them when we meet. I will be recording our interview on audiotape. I will bring some historic images with me to share with you.

If you have any questions or need to change the time or place of the interview please leave me a message at 503-XXX-XXXX.

Thank you for your time,

Tanya Lyn March

Interview Scheduled for:

Date: _____

Time: _____

Location: _____

Biographical Information

1. Your full name (and maiden name if applicable)?
2. When were you born?
3. What is your gender?
4. What is your ethnicity?
5. In what state were you born?
6. In what state (or country) was your father born?
7. What type of employment did he have in 1939?
8. In what state (or country) was your mother born?
9. What type of employment did she have in 1939?
10. What was your most recent occupation?
11. How many siblings do you have?
12. How large was your family when you moved into Guild's Lake Community?
13. What brought you to Portland in the 1940s (if from Portland which neighborhood did you live in 1939)?
14. Did you have any relatives living at Guild's Lake Courts?
15. Did your family own a car?
16. How long did you live in the Guild's Lake Court housing (if applicable)?
17. If you attended Fruit and Flower at Guild's Lake, which years you attended this nursery school?

Architectural Memory For Guild's Lake Court Residents

1. Where was your dwelling(s) (street names, or location to notable structures)?

2. Did you have more than one residence while living at Guild's Lake Courts?

(If yes) Why was your family moved?

Because a better unit became available, because the composition of your family changed or because of deconstruction after the War?

3. What was your space like?

4. Were you in a duplex, four-plex or six-plex?

5. Did you have a victory garden?

6. What were the decorations like in your home?

7. How was your home heated?

8. Who cooked and where?

a. Did you have any appliances?

9. Please describe any or all of the five community buildings as you remember them?

a. What were they used for?

b. Did different sections of Guild's Lake Courts have better access to amenities?

10. What types of structures were there for children to play on?

11. How was your home furnished?

a. Who provided the furnishings?

12. Did your home feel temporary to you?

13. Were you employed in the defense industry?

Thank you for your time!

APPENDIX: G

INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

I. *Why Guild's Lake Courts?*

A. Introduction: First covering over any gaps the Pre-Interview.

1. What brought you to the Guild's Lake area?
2. Can you tell me about your life there?
3. Did you have other housing options in Portland public or private?
4. Did you have other housing options outside of Portland public or private? (If yes to either of above) Why did your family opt not to act on these options?
5. What was Guild's Lake's reputation in your family/ social circles?
6. What were your expectations prior to moving there?
7. How many bedrooms did your dwelling before Guild's Lake have vs. how many bedrooms in the Guild's Lake Courts?
8. Did you share your bedroom, what was that like if you did?

II. *At Guild's Lake Courts*

A. Early Impressions of the Public Housing

1. First impression (what did it look like)?
2. Rites of passage?
3. Composition of the residents (race, religion)?
4. Influence of the mother on the family in Guild's Lake (did she work, was your father overseas)?
5. Did your mother's role change in anyway while you lived in Guild's Lake?

6. Economic circumstances of the residents: Were you aware of class differences, racial differences, or political differences (liberal, socialist, etc)?

B. Social Life

1. Did you ever attend one of the three on-site daycare centers (nursery school, Friendly House, or Fruit and Flower)? If so what were the teachers like, were there nurses, where did the other children come from?

2. Would you describe this experience as an experience in communal living?

3. Did you attend public school at Guild's Lake school (perhaps inside of Guild's Lake recreation hall)?

4. Did you or your parents work at the Willamette Iron or another Iron foundry? Did both of your parents work in the war industry?

5. Were there pets at your home or within the development? Did any of the yards have fences? Where could you walk a dog?

6. Were there popular meeting places for teenagers?

7. If so were there different spots based on age, gender or race?

8. How was vagrancy and criminal behavior dealt with?

9. What interaction was there with non-public housing residents white or Black?

10. Were you a member of the juvenile patrol or fire patrol? How often did they meet what was their mission?

11. Did you compete in any garden contests? If so why?

12. Were your parents active on the tenant committee? What did the committee do exactly for the community?

13. Did your family attend a local religious institution?

14. How often? What was the congregation like (race, age, local)?

C. Extracurricular Activities

1. Sports (ice-skating, baseball)?

2. Music?
3. Politics?
4. Dances?
5. What did you do after school?

D. In any section above, what was the racial composition of participants?
Were there territorial areas based on gender or race?

E. The Historical Picture

1. Were there major events (parades, fires, D-Day, birthdays)?
2. How did residents react to relocation?
3. What was the city of Portland like at that time?
4. What was the general attitude of Guild's Lake residents? Did they want to live in Portland?
5. Do you have any knowledge of the court case or the injunction against J. T. Dolan, which temporarily halted the removal of housing units at Guild's Lake Courts?
6. Why was Guild's Lake Courts torn down?
7. Why were the permanent community structures torn down?

III. Beyond Guild's Lake Courts

A. Conclusion

1. How did living at Guild's Lake influence your life after Guild's Lake?
2. Was your family interested in homeownership?
3. Were your parents talking to banks, saving money etc?
4. Where did you move when you left Guild's Lake? (And when?)
5. Did you ever go back to the Guild's Lake neighborhood to visit etc?
6. Brief overview of life.