

Boulder Day Nursery turns 85

In April 1917, the United States declared war on Germany and entered World War I. During the following summer and fall, men from Boulder County left for Europe and, for the first time, an increasing number of women suddenly were forced to support their families. They began to work outside the home.

Child care as we know it today did not exist. Most women with children were married, and married women were expected to stay at home with their children. At first, members of the local Woman's Club took the younger-than-school-age children into their own homes, but the club members quickly realized they couldn't accommodate them all.

When, in late 1917, demand outstripped the volunteers' ability to provide care, 15 members of the Woman's Club Civic Committee, as well as additional representatives from most of Boulder's churches and

fraternal orders, organized the Boulder Day Nursery Association.

In spring 1917, Boulder Day Nursery opened its doors.

As Boulder's first child-care facility, the nursery originally was intended to serve families with limited resources. Today, the nursery is still in business with the same mission and is one of the oldest nurseries in the western United States.

For the first few years, the association operated out of rented locations on Walnut Street. Fees for child care were a very modest 10 cents per day for regular attendees, and 10 cents per hour for occasional drop-ins.

Those fees didn't go far in covering operating expenses, so nursery association members solicited donations by placing milk bottles in the Boulder County Clerk's office, movie theater lobbies, and in local restaurants and businesses. Additional donations came from

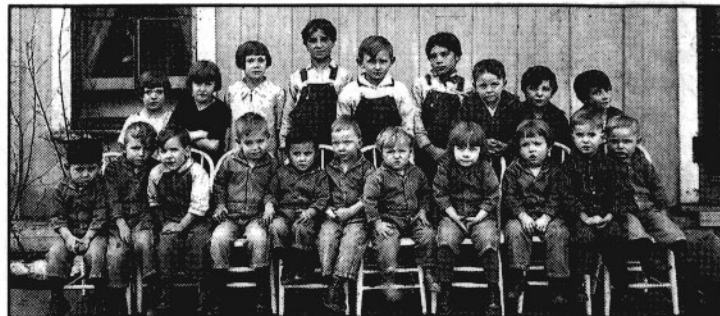


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Boulder County History

church and fraternal groups, the Community Chest (predecessor to the United Fund and Boulder County United Way) and the city and county of Boulder.

After the war was over, many of the mothers remained in the work force. The continued demand created the need for a larger nursery building and more space for a playground. Administrators were attracted to Hannah Barker Park at Spruce and 15th streets, and they leased the northeast corner as a site for a new building.

In 1929, well-known Boulder architect Glen Huntington drew up the plans. The nursery association, the Lions Club and the William and John McKenna



Carnegie Branch Library for Local History, Boulder Historical Society collection

These children attended the Boulder Day Nursery in 1929, the year before the completion of its current building.

families provided the \$12,000 needed for construction.

The current Boulder Day Nursery building, at 1518 Spruce St., was completed in the spring of 1930 and remained unchanged until 1969 when a preschool addition was built on the southern end.

In March 1970, then First Lady Pat Nixon visited the nursery during a national tour of prominent early childhood education centers. At that time the country was involved in the Vietnam War, and more than 100 anti-war protesters stood

peacefully outside the building during Nixon's visit.

From 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. Friday, the Boulder Day Nursery will host a party to celebrate its anniversary as well as the completion of its most recent renovation. People from the nursery's past are especially invited to attend. Call Steve Callander at (303) 442-7605 for more information.

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